

CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT PLAN



City of Rye, New York

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and
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I. INTRODUCTION

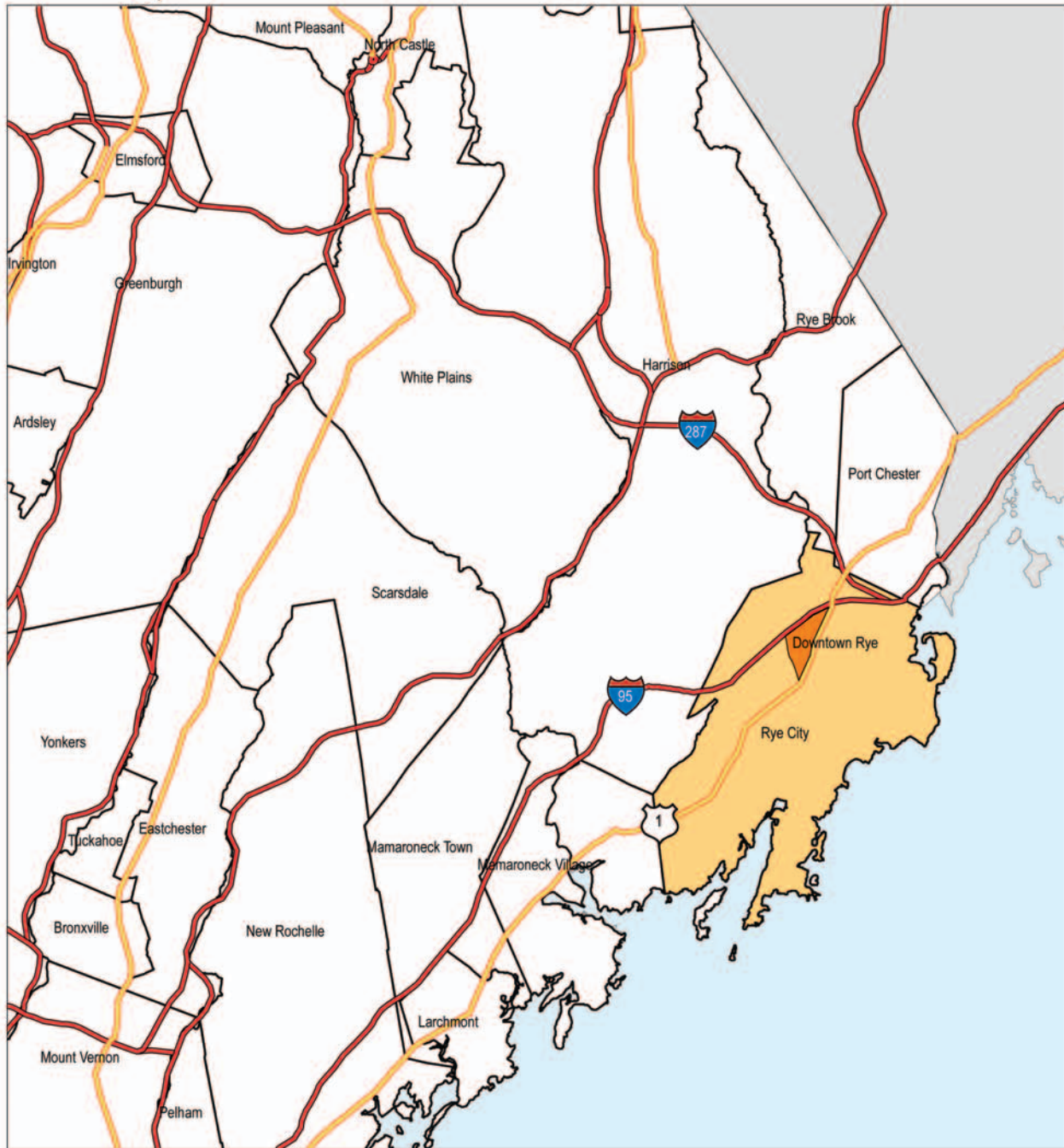
Planning Context

The City of Rye, New York, is located in the southeastern portion of the State on the Long Island Sound in Westchester County, approximately 25 miles northeast of New York City, at the intersection of Interstates 287 (east-west) and 95 (north-south) (see Map 1). For the City's nearly 15,000 residents, the Central Business District (CBD) or downtown is among the most valued assets. The area between Purchase Street and Boston Post Road south of the Metro-North Bridge constitutes the quarter-mile core of the CBD, with Purchase Street functioning as the retail spine.

Rye's Central Business District has several aspects that make it a veritable success story for a downtown. The CBD is a charming district with a well-maintained, traditional main street atmosphere. Immediately adjacent to the Metro North train station and in close proximity to I-95 and Route 287 interchanges, the area is accessible to a large, affluent population. Additionally, the CBD's manageable size and double-loaded retail corridor, make it a walkable, pedestrian-friendly shopping experience. Given this mix of strengths, the CBD has been experiencing a boom as demonstrated by particularly high retail rents and low vacancy rates. The district has tended to attract high-end stores and a wealthy clientele. As testimony to the popularity of the CBD, the area has experienced an ongoing parking shortage.

Despite this positive picture, there have been changes in the CBD that have been troubling for the community and affect the long-term potential of downtown. The CBD's obstacles directly relate to how to effectively handle its current success and shape its future market niche. For example, although the parking shortage indicates a healthy customer population, it also stands as a hurdle to growing downtown as a destination. The decline in the amount and quality of retail in the CBD, as well as the recent loss of national retailers such as The Gap, Imaginarium, Persnickety, J. Pockers, Sam Goody and others from their downtown locations has also been a cause for concern. In some cases, these spaces have converted to non-comparison retail uses including restaurants, banks and specialty foods. Until recently, the district had also been experiencing a proliferation of banks along Purchase Street. In 2005 and 2006 the number of banks in the CBD increased from five to nine branches. This situation has since been addressed through zoning that caps the number of banks permitted in the CBD. The introduction of parking pay stations in the off-street parking lots in August 2005 was also met with concern. There is a perception that these conditions are hurting the CBD and that the changes in the mix of uses will adversely impact the business environment since there

MAP 1 Location Map



Legend

-  Rye City Boundary
-  Downtown Rye Boundary

Sources: City of Rye GIS Data
Westchester County GIS Data
Phillips Preiss Shapiro Associates, Inc. 2006

MAP 2 Study Area



Legend

Study area



Sources: City of Rye GIS Data
Westchester County GIS Data
Phillips Preiss Shapiro Associates, Inc. 2006

may be less of a reason to shop and visit downtown. Thus, the question follows as to what impact these patterns and developments will likely have on the CBD over time.

The City decided to take offensive stance in tackling these issues and defining a market-based vision for the CBD. In the spring of 2005, the Rye City Planning Commission created a subcommittee assisted by its City Planner to evaluate the conditions of the CBD. The subcommittee met several times throughout the year and interviewed CBD property owners, commercial brokers and business operators. The subcommittee learned a significant amount regarding market forces in the region and what improvements and changes may help Rye, but agreed that given the complexities of the issues additional assistance was required from professionals experienced with "Main Street" planning. In late 2005, the subcommittee prepared a request for proposals (RFP) seeking qualified professionals to assess the CBD's current strengths, weakness, opportunities and threats and to recommend alternative strategies that keep Rye competitive and desirable.

Planning Process

In April 2006, the Rye City Council created the Retail Strategy Task Force to develop recommendations to "maintain and improve the business climate in our downtown." The City Council expanded the Task Force in May 2006 to include additional members, including members of the City Planning Commission.

The Task Force began its work in May and agreed to retain the consulting services of Phillips Preiss Shapiro Associates, Inc. (PPSA) to assist with the planning process. The CBD study area generally includes an area west of Boston Post Road, east of Theodore Fremd Avenue, south of I-95 and north of Orchard Street (see Map 2). Most properties are located within the City's B-1 Neighborhood Business and B-2 Central Business Districts.

The Task Force provided direction and policy guidance to the consultant in shaping the recommendations in this plan. Their experience and input was invaluable to the process. It is expected that the Task Force will continue to encourage the implementation of plan recommendations in the future.

The Task Force and consultant were also guided by broader public input provided in various forums throughout the planning process. The Task Force assisted with outreach to property owners, the Rye Merchant's Association, residents, community organizations and others. The Task Force administered merchant and shopper surveys on Purchase Street in September 2006 and distributed flyers for a public workshop on October 23, 2006. The City also established a website to update the public on the status of the planning study, public meetings and surveys.

The planning process was about gaining an understanding of CBD trends and what could be done to improve the area. The process, facilitated by a consultant and City staff, became an opportunity for a community of diverse interests to have a constructive conversation about the CBD and how to manage inevitable changes in the future.

Planning Vision

The public and Task Force discussed a range of challenges and opportunities in the CBD. As with every planning process, there was a diversity of opinions. Some, for instance, were more concerned than others about prevailing trends and conditions in the CBD. Some were more willing than others to initiate or promote significant changes in the CBD (e.g., increases/decreases in development intensity or funding for projects) to address identified problems such as declining retail spaces or lack of parking. In the end, there was prevailing agreement that the Rye CBD is generally successful and that a more conservative approach best fit the needs of the community. There was con-

sensus that incremental recommendations should be pursued that build on downtown's successes rather than aggressive policies that induce dramatic changes. The vision for the CBD is to advance strategies that improve existing conditions in such a way that preserves and enhances the CBD's aesthetic qualities and community character since the CBD's "charm" and "small town feel" are among its most prized assets.

There was general consensus that planning strategies for the CBD should focus on three topical areas: (1) Vitality and Retail Mix; (2) Main Street Management, Streetscape and Design; and (3) Parking Management. Each of these areas is a chapter in this study. The vision statements and goals by topic are listed below. The strategies contained herein are aimed at achieving these goals for downtown.

Vitality and Retail Mix:

Make Rye an even better, more diverse place to shop while enhancing community character.

Goals

- Promote mixed-use to foster social interaction and place-making
- Diversify retail mix to include more convenience retail
- Increase foot traffic to strengthen existing downtown businesses

Main Street Management:

Reinforce Rye's charm and small-town feel.

Goals

- Improve pedestrian environment and street-level experience
- Preserve historic character and ensure contextual development

Parking Management

Provide ample and convenient parking, with sufficient turnover to support downtown businesses.

Goals

- Provide parking in character with community and community consensus on parking
- Maximize customer parking convenience and ensure appropriate turnover



II. VITALITY AND RETAIL MIX

I. ANALYSIS

Retail Inventory and Mix

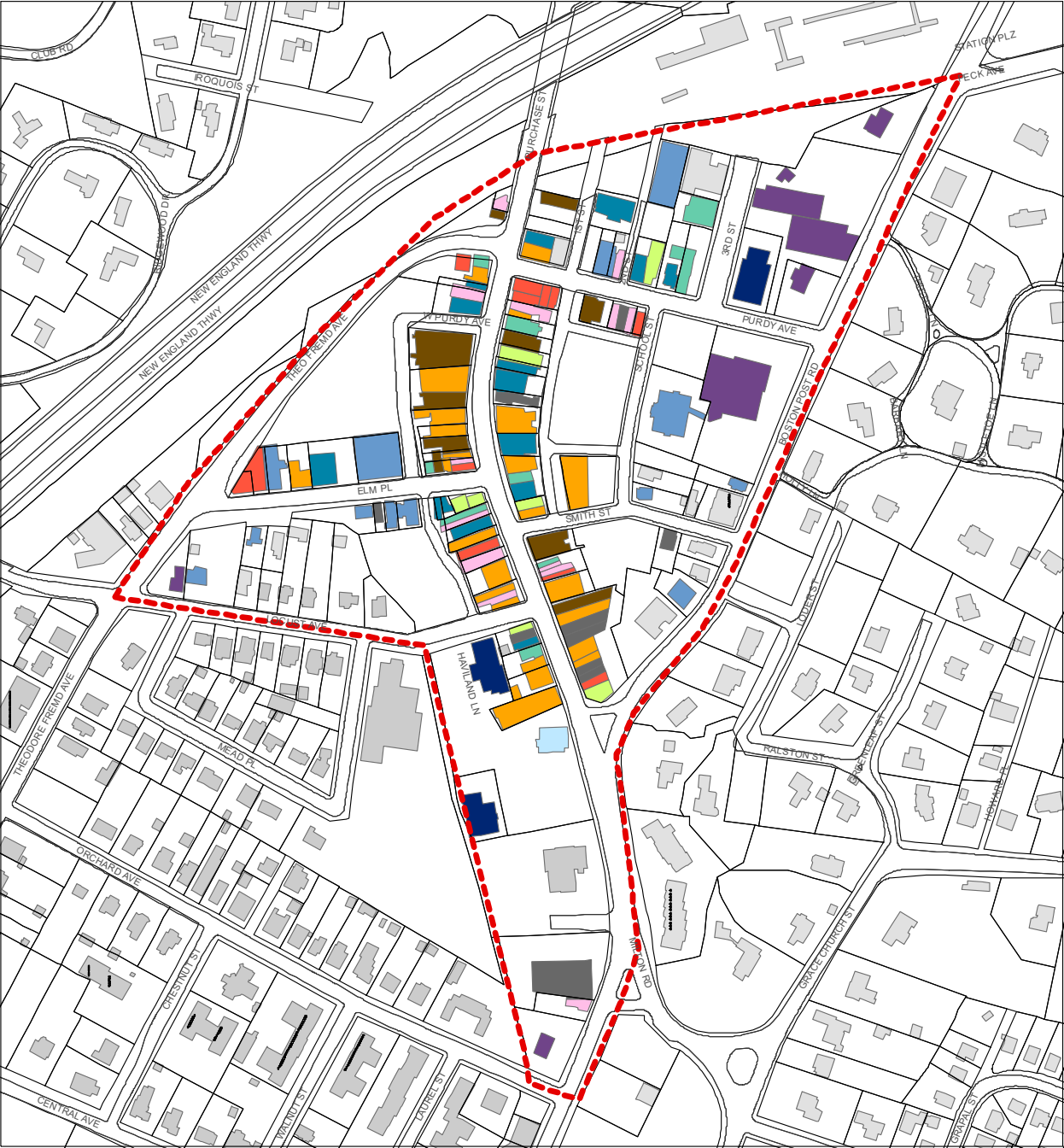
Downtown Rye is a booming upscale shopping district, with specialty retailers and a restaurant row but declining convenience retail.

- **Downtown is thriving with over 120 businesses in ground-floor (street-level) spaces.** The total retail inventory or leasable ground floor space is approximately 210,000 square feet. Commercial/retail activity is centered on Purchase Street, the retail spine of downtown, and extends to the immediate side streets which include Purdy Avenue, Elm Place, and Smith Street, as well as portions of Boston Post Road. Of the downtown businesses, many are independent shops and local chains, providing a more authentic and unique downtown texture and shopping experience. The breakdown of businesses is as follows:

<u>Ground Floor Use</u>	<u>Percentage</u>	<u>Number of Establishments</u>
Retail Use (comparison/convenience)	33%	42
Food and Drink Establishments	20%	24 (half of which are restaurants)
Personal Service	15%	18
Personal Service (Hair)	7%	9
Bank	7%	8
Office/Agency Use	16%	20
Institutional/Municipal	2%	2
Total	100%	123

Downtown Rye is roughly one-third retail, including comparison and convenience shopping. (“Comparison shopping” refers to clothing, furniture, gifts and other items which can be significantly differentiated by price and quality, as compared with “convenience shopping” for items such as groceries, hardware, dry cleaning, etc., for which a premium is placed on convenience and proximity.) As demonstrated in Map 3, the majority of retail is comparison-oriented, with a notable focus on women’s apparel and shoes. Personal services (including hair salons) comprise another 20 percent or so. Notably, food and drink establishments, although growing in num-

MAP 3 Retail Mix



Legend

- | | | |
|--|---|--|
| Comparison | Financial/Insurance services | Study area |
| Convenience | Gas/Auto-related | |
| Personal services | Office | |
| Professional services | Food retail | |
| Restaurant | Governmental | |
| Institutional | Vacant | |



Sources: City of Rye GIS Data
Westchester County GIS Data
Phillips Preiss Shapiro Associates, Inc. 2006

ber to form a substantial cluster, still compromise only about 20 percent of all establishments. The influx of banks into downtown which precipitated legislation to prohibit their proliferation is evidenced by the fact they comprise some 7 percent of all downtown businesses, mostly located in prominent storefronts. The existing ground floor office uses are “grandfathered” uses as Rye wisely prohibited office as a ground floor use in the central business district several years ago. This regulation ensures more vibrant and interesting storefronts, and in turn, increased opportunities for foot traffic.

- **Market trends point to the strength and vitality of downtown, making a retail strategy more about managing success.** Downtown has an upscale retail focus, reflective of the affluence of the proximal population. Downtown’s varied and idiosyncratic spaces have attracted many unique/specialty retailers, higher end stores and boutiques. Downtown rents are high and have been increasing steadily in recently years, with spaces commanding an average of \$55 per square foot (with asking prices in the \$75 range). The retail base is very stable compared to other downtowns, since a very high percentage of businesses are long-standing retailers. Both the vacancy rate at 5 percent and the turnover rate at 2 percent are considered very low. Additionally, given the office worker population in downtown, restaurants and retailers are benefiting from strong lunchtime traffic. Foot traffic has probably gone down over the past years given shifts in the retail mix; however, the richness of community facilities in downtown partly makes up for this trend.
- **Despite its small size, it is the diversity of downtown establishments that attracts people to Rye.** A downtown shopper survey conducted in 2006 revealed that a variety of retail/services were tied as the most frequent activity in downtown. A near equal portion of the respondents cited banking, shopping for specialty groceries, eating at restaurants, going to cafes/coffee shops, doing laundry and going clothing shopping as their most frequent downtown activity. The range of activity suggests that the diversity of downtown retail and services is a major strength. More importantly, **people are coming to downtown to shop.** Shopping is still the primary activity in Rye, as over two-thirds of respondents indicated that they typically shop when they visit downtown. Many other downtowns in similar contexts have shifted away from shopping to services. Rye has retained its role a retail destination, which is likely a product of the affluence of its market base, i.e., Rye residents, which can support a relatively higher percentage of specialty retail and dining given their spending power.
- **High rents and limited inventory are shifting the retail mix.** Rents on Purchase Street span \$55-\$75 per square foot, and were in the \$35 per square foot range just a few years ago. However, the southerly part of Purchase is softer on rents because of the proximity of available parking. At the high end of the spectrum, these rents will attract banks and restaurants, as the types of businesses that can afford the higher rents. This is precisely the pattern witnessed in Rye, and neither business types generate much foot traffic. Unfortunately, convenience-oriented retailers and small mom-and-pop shops cannot afford these rent levels, and rather will seek rents in the mid \$20s. Since high rents are impacting retail mix in downtown, Rye must be both savvy and realistic about addressing this issue. As rents are the product of supply and demand, they are not likely to change or reflect greater diversity in range without a significant increase in inventory (i.e., growing downtown).

It is important to note that some national retailers, namely The Gap, Imaginarium, Sam Goody and others, also recently left downtown (one notable exception was the introduction of Joseph A. Banks, a national men’s apparel chain). Many attributed this loss to rising rents. In fact, the loss of these businesses was due in large part to regional trends (retail cannibalization) and national chain-level decisions, and not to the dynamics of Rye’s local market. Furthermore, national chains as more prominent establishments can generally pay higher rents.

Moving forward, rents are likely to continue to go up but more moderately than they have been in recent years. Rye is also going to continue to see a more sophisticated clientele in downtown, largely comprised of Rye residents. The taste and preferences of this demographic will likely weed out some out-of-date businesses, making “current” marketing and upscale appeal essential for the survival of existing businesses.

- **Rye’s restaurant sector has recently taken off, creating a “restaurant row” - a trend that is likely to continue.** In recent years, Rye’s restaurant sector has significantly expanded, growing from some three or so restaurants to over ten. It is important to recognize that generally one-third of traditional downtowns are food and drink establishments. So currently, even with the rise in the number restaurants, Rye is under its potential in this arena at only 20 percent and can expect something closer to 20 or more restaurants in the long-term, with higher turnover. The gradual accretion of restaurants is also expected because restaurants are capable of paying Rye’s high rents.
- **This trend towards increasing restaurants will have some notable impacts on downtown.** It will mean a further lessening of foot traffic. Since people are willing to travel extra distances for specialty food, restaurants and entertainment attractions, growth in restaurants will also precipitate a shift to more of a non-resident customer base, but not to a transformative degree. Restaurants have already begun to reposition Rye from a sleepy downtown at night to a vibrant evening destination. With a growing nighttime clientele, appropriate lighting will become even more important. Many retailers have already begun to extend their hours of operation to capitalize on the growing population of evening restaurant-goers. Of course, the growth in restaurants has also triggered concern about sanitation and upkeep of delivery areas, which is further addressed in the next chapter on Main Street Management.

Currently, outdoor or al fresco dining is not permitted and given Purchase Street’s sidewalk width, it might prove difficult to accommodate. However, outdoor dining would be a nice complement to the backside or lot-facing portions of Purchase Street. Additionally, on Elm Place and Purdy Avenue, as well as along Blind Brook, permitting outdoor dining presents a major opportunity and could help to strengthen these ancillary retail streets. Many of the respondents to the downtown shopper survey also supported outdoor dining as an improvement they would like to see in downtown.

- **There is a strong desire for greater convenience-oriented retail in downtown.** Retail viability and health is a concern, particularly bringing back convenience retail for more diversity. There is a feeling that mom and pop shops like the Rye Smoke Shop, Arcade Books and others are imperiled. Rye residents would like to be able to have places to shop in downtown for their convenience needs. However, given the current rents, limited retail space and the relatively small size of stores in downtown, new convenience retailers are not likely to locate in downtown.

Although Rye has traditionally been anti-commercial/retail sprawl beyond the bounds of the Purchase Street core, increasing the inventory of retail space in downtown is one way to support the attraction of a major convenience retailer. At present, Purchase Street is the only real place for retail to be located, especially due to the low foot traffic. Parking requirements for retail on the side streets also present an additional barrier. A potential approach for expansion is to create a second “Main Street” by building out Purdy Street, which is permitted under current zoning, but may require tweaking of parking requirements. A convenience retailer will come to Rye provided there is a viable space with low enough rent being offered (i.e., mid-\$20s per square foot). But, such space is not currently available in the CBD. In order to ensure these rents, the City would need to incentivize a developer to offer lower rents by providing a cross-subsidy through luxury upstairs housing, likely with

a density bonus (e.g., an additional floor or two) attached to the provision of ground-floor convenience retail space/tenant. This approach of increasing development may be challenging to implement, given community character concerns.

- **Shopping is becoming viewed as a fun activity.** As for desired retailers in downtown, most people cited preference for a toy store, followed by national retailer clothing stores (e.g., J.Crew, Banana Republic, Gap, etc.). The high demand for a toy store suggests that people are looking for a place to bring their kids. This is consistent with shopping as a recreational activity. It also highlights the fact that Rye is a very child-oriented community.

Market Position

Downtown is a “meet and greet” place, local gathering spot and shopping destination for Rye residents.

- **Downtown businesses have a predominately local clientele.** According to resident and merchant surveys conducted in 2006, two out of three shoppers in downtown are Rye residents, followed by residents from other nearby towns and local employees. Smaller segments of the market include commuters and passby traffic. The worker and the nonresident population are roughly the same which confirms that downtown is really for and about the Rye residents. Therefore, despite the specialty shopping focus, Rye is not a regional destination. The City of Rye is downtown's primary trade area, defined as the geographic area from which roughly 70 percent of the customer base is drawn. Promoting a mix of uses that primarily serves Rye residents is important, as there is no expressed desire to become a regional destination.
- **Rye boasts a feeling of small town intimacy.** People shopping in Rye tend to know each other. In fact, the shoppers survey conducted as part of the CBD Study revealed that the majority of Rye shoppers are actually long-time residents, many living in the City for more than 20 years. This finding suggests that downtown has significant social capital to tap into beyond its status as a commercial destination. The “small town” atmosphere, both physically and socially, was one of the most frequently cited strengths of the district. Managing success for Downtown Rye is about retaining a small town feel.
- **Similarly, shopping and going to Downtown Rye is a social event.** Shoppers identified downtown Rye with “friendliness” and other social attributes. One shopper echoed this sentiment, characterizing downtown as “a nice place to bump into friends.” The concentration of civic and community spaces in and around Downtown adds to this quality. In fact, there are several locations that have been identified as gathering spots: Starbucks, the central portion of Purchase Street, the Village green and library area, and the Post Office. Nearly one in three visitors to downtown are not shopping but conducting other activities, further highlighting Downtown as more than a shopping destination, but also a social experience. The implication is that Rye should start thinking about downtown as a meeting place, with events, urban design and retail focused on place-making value.
- **Rye also has value as a civic center.** As Map 4 shows, a number of community/public facilities and open spaces are located within the downtown core, giving people places and a reason to interact in Downtown beyond shopping. These institutions help to further bolster daytime activity and on-street presence, although foot traffic remains relatively low overall. This civic identity dovetails and strengthens the social image of downtown. Furthermore, as shopping becomes more of a recreational activity, people are growing more enthusiastic about shopping where there is a civic center.

MAP 4
Open Spaces and Community/Public Facilities



Legend

- Open Spaces
- Public Facilities
- Community Facilities



Sources: City of Rye GIS Data
Westchester County GIS Data
Phillips Preiss Shapiro Associates, Inc. 2006

Sources of Demand

Although Downtown has a few populations to draw upon, the spending power of Rye's affluent residents is the major force behind downtown's success.

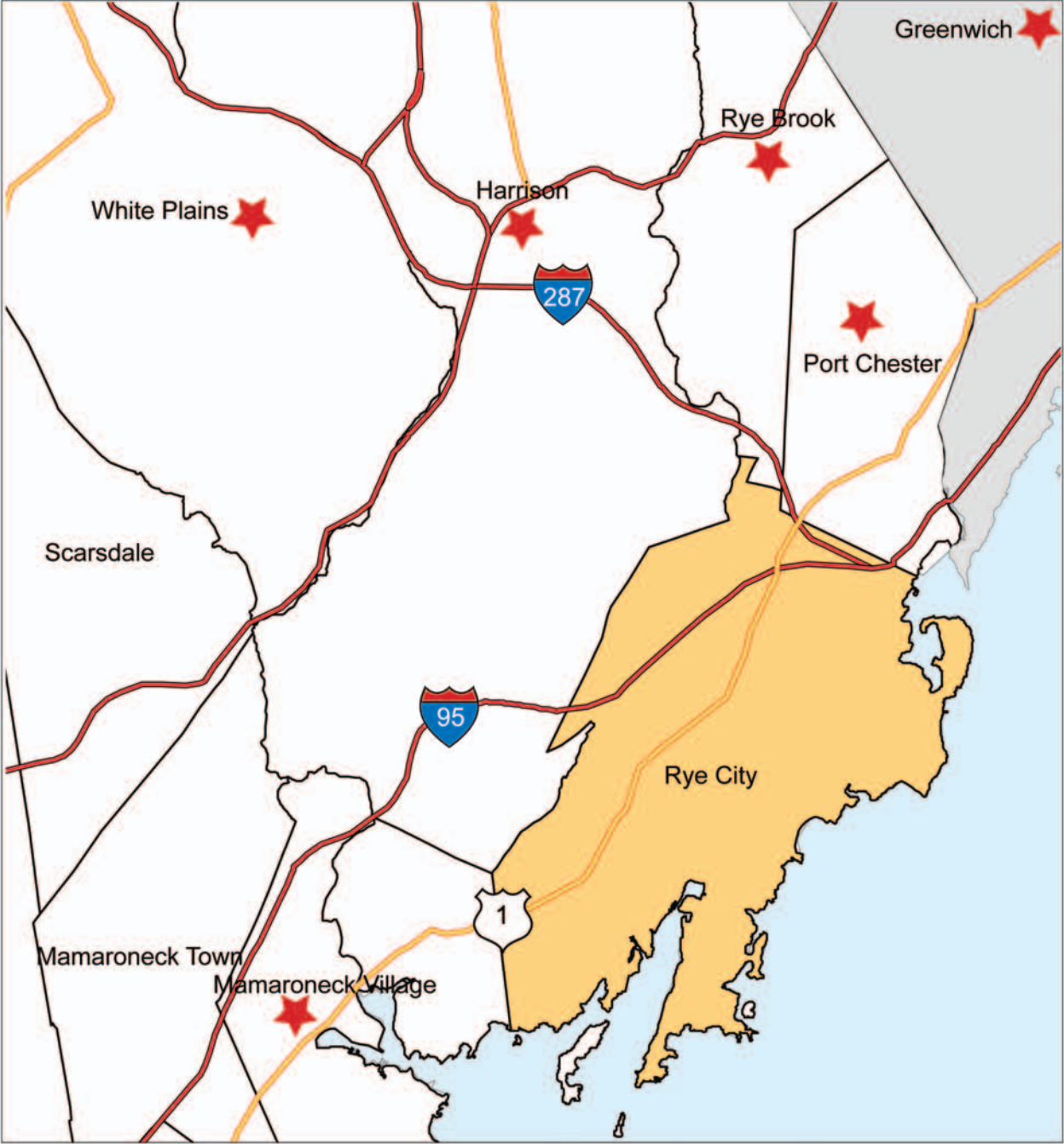
- **The primary population for downtown is Rye residents.** Rye has a stable population of approximately 15,000 residents, witnessing negligible population growth of .13 percent from 1990 to 2000. Rye's population is at the higher end in terms of income level, and ranks among the most affluent towns in Westchester County. Income levels are as follows:

<u>City of Rye</u>	<u>Income</u>
2000 Median Household Income	\$115,245 (compared to Greenwich \$112,041)
2000 Average Household Income	\$210,817



Given the high income levels, not only does Rye have an affluent population, but based on the significant differential between Median and Average Household Income figures, Rye's wealthiest are very wealthy. In fact, Rye's demographic profile mirrors that of Greenwich, Connecticut, although Greenwich has four times the population of Rye. Correspondingly, educational attainment levels for the 25 and older population are also quite high with over 85 percent of the population having received at least some college or higher and over 88 percent of working population is employed work in white-collar professions. This is a sophisticated, professional and affluent population with a total retail spending power equaling \$313 million (based on Claritas Marketplace data). Downtown can anticipate capturing 25 percent of food and drink retail spending (\$17 million) and 10 percent of other retail spending (\$25 million).

- **The secondary population for downtown to draw on is the population of residents from nearby towns.** Based on both merchant and shopper surveys conducted in 2006, Rye is already tapping into a portion of this market, however it significantly lags behind Rye residents as a percentage of clientele. Compared with Rye, the demographics for Rye Brook and Harrison combined are similar, although Rye is slightly more affluent overall (compare at \$91,627 for Median Household Income and \$125,776 for Average Household Income). The total population for Rye Brook and Harrison is 10,291 residents, and unlike Rye population is growing more significantly, approximately 10 percent from 1990 to 2000. Educational attainment is high but not as high as Rye's level. These towns do have a high owner-occupancy rate though at 85 percent of housing units. The combined spending power for Rye Brook and Harrison is estimated at \$214 million, of which Rye might hope to capture a modest percent. From a taste perspective, this demographic will likely demand the same goods and services as the Rye resident population, with a less interest in convenience retail (given relative distance) and a greater emphasis on specialty retail and restaurants.
- **A tertiary population for Downtown Rye to tap into is local employees.** Downtown has a strong market for office in Downtown, both in office-only and mixed use buildings. There are a number of professional offices focused on financial services, legal services, architecture, and others fields. Municipal employees associated with City Hall and other service providers (police, fire, library, post office) are also located in downtown and comprise another captive daytime population. Downtown workers contribute to downtown spending, particularly lunch hour traffic at restaurants and stores.
- **A smaller market segment to draw upon is the commuter population which utilizes Rye's Metro North train station.** The Metro North train station is located in the northern portion of downtown, just east of Purchase Street. The northbound tracks are closest to downtown, making it more likely downtown can capital-

MAP 5
Competing Retail



Legend

-  City of Rye Boundaries
-  Competing Retail Areas

Sources: City of Rye GIS Data
Westchester County GIS Data
Phillips Preiss Shapiro Associates, Inc. 2006

ize on commuter traffic in the evening (returning from New York City). Although Rye is a popular station, many of the commuters are likely to be Rye residents, but for that segment which are ‘park and ride’ commuters from other towns. (Rye’s parking spots are in very high demand with an extensive waiting list). Unfortunately, the location of entrances to 287 and Interstate 95 do not require commuters from other areas to drive through downtown as part of their commute. Poor pedestrian circulation in the station area - a cross between parking lot and thru street - makes it relatively uninviting and unsafe to walk from the train station to the downtown core. Any retail stops by commuters either on their way to or way home from work are likely to revolve around convenience shopping, e.g., dry cleaning, groceries, etc. Enforcing short-term parking regulations and improving pedestrian access to downtown will be essential for making Downtown Rye a viable stop on the commuter route.

Competing Retail

Rye’s competition is other upscale shopping districts or locations.

- **Merchants overwhelmingly identified Greenwich as their main competitor.** Mirroring this observation, many shoppers responded that they also go to Greenwich to dine, while an even greater proportion head there to shop for clothing. This trend is not surprising given the proximity of Greenwich, the upscale taste of the Rye shopper and the fact that Greenwich and Rye both serve very similar demographic market segments. Greenwich’s Median Household Income is also high and comparable at nearly \$115,000. One notable difference is that at four times Rye’s population, Greenwich’s commercial strip is also four times the size. Greenwich is also a regional shopping destination with a large daytime office population.

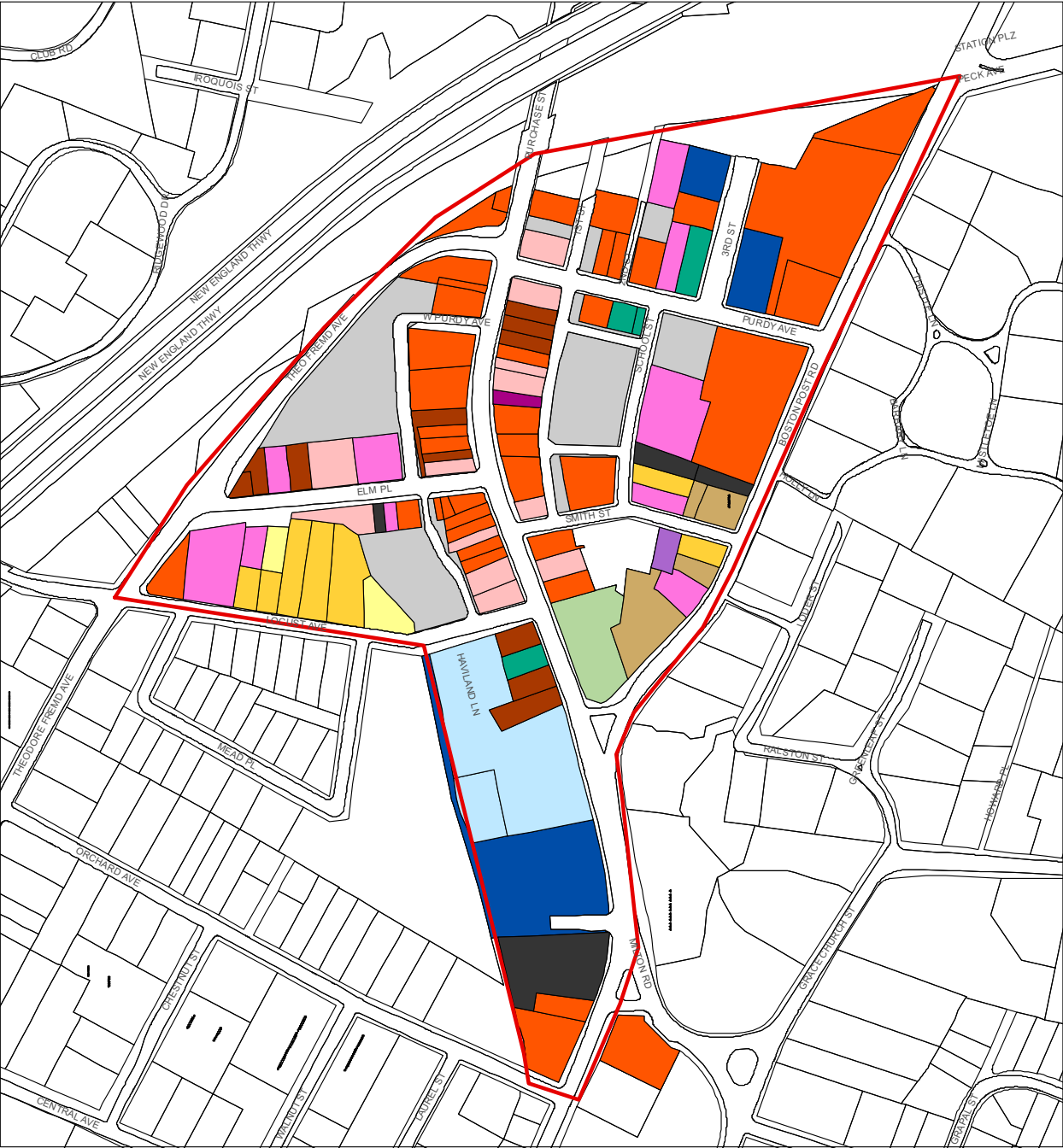
As for other dining options, Rye shoppers are also going to Port Chester, Larchmont and Mamaroneck, as well as to New York City. Not surprisingly, people are willing to travel further distances for dining and entertainment experiences, whereas proximity is a determinant for convenience retail. Adjacent to Rye, Port Chester was identified as the primary convenience shopping destination, with several auto-oriented shopping centers to absorb this demand. Rye Brook and Mamaroneck are other centers for convenience shopping, and to a lesser degree, so are the commercial areas of Rye outside the CBD.

Shopping malls are also major competitors for downtown’s comparison shopping retailers. Since Rye has a concentration of comparison retail in clothing and shoes, these stores also compete with more upscale malls, namely those in White Plains, where 30 percent of respondents said they shop for clothes. Still, Greenwich and New York City both present stiffer competition for Rye in this category. In general, Rye need not compete with shopping centers on their terms. Rye distinguishes itself though its “downtown” atmosphere and specialty retailers.

- **Although Rye’s rents are very high for Westchester, the Connecticut Gold Coast is realizing even higher rents.** This situation is illustrated in the table below which compares rents in some upscale business districts in Westchester and Connecticut.

<u>Shopping Location</u>	<u>Rent Per Square Foot</u>
<i>Westchester</i>	
Rye	\$50-55, except the banks \$75
Rye Brook	\$55-60 (note: shopping mall)
Bronxville	\$45

MAP 6 Land Use



Legend

Land use

- Single family residential
- Two-family residential
- Multi-family residential
- Retail/Services
- Office

- Mixed: retail/office
- Mixed: retail/housing
- Mixed: vacant/office
- Mixed: vacant/housing
- Mixed: vacant/retail
- Mixed: retail/office/services/vacant

- Institutional
- Government
- Parking
- Vacant/under construction
- Study area



Sources: City of Rye GIS Data
Westchester County GIS Data
Phillips Preiss Shapiro Associates, Inc. 2006

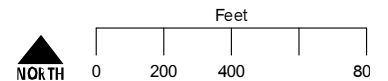
MAP 7 Publicly Owned Properties



Legend

Publicly owned properties

- CITY OF RYE
- WESTCHESTER COUNTY
- US POST OFFICE



Sources: City of Rye GIS Data
Westchester County GIS Data
Phillips Preiss Shapiro Associates, Inc. 2006

<i>Connecticut</i>	
Greenwich	\$100-\$125
Westport	\$110-120
New Canaan	\$65

Land Use and Development Opportunities

Although built-out along Purchase Street, downtown will continue to develop along the side streets of the district.

- **From a land use perspective, Downtown Rye, like most downtowns, is characterized as having a mix of uses, with retail/commercial predominating.** Map 6 classifies each parcel by land use category. In addition to retail, there is also a significant office sector, both in the upper floors above retail on Purchase Street and in standalone office buildings on the side streets, particularly on Elm Place. Professional offices in downtown include a range of professional services offices including: financial services, architecture, real estate, etc. There is a growing demand for this type of space, as available office space in Greenwich is running out. As for residential use, there is only a limited amount of downtown housing. At this point, most of it is concentrated in the upper stories of retail buildings on Purchase Street, and in some detached houses on the side streets. As a civic center, downtown also has a number of publicly-owned properties and institutional uses.
- **Under the current zoning, there is significant allowance for growth and development.** Most of Downtown study area is in the B-2 Central Business District zone, with the peripheral portions of Locust Avenue and Boston Post Road in the B-1 Neighborhood Business District zone. Whether or not residents actually want to grow downtown, the fact is development of relatively significant height (3 stories and 40 foot maximum) and density (2.0 Floor Area Ratio) is permissible under the zoning regulations for both zones. There is a need to provide more guidelines than currently called for to ensure appropriate contextual development. For example, the residential parcels along Locust Avenue are collectively considered a “soft” site where development is likely because they are under-built relative to the current B-1 zoning and are all in common ownership. Design guidelines and form-based zoning can help to ensure that when development does take place, it contributes to downtown as a whole, complementing the overall retail strategy and the design vocabulary of downtown and the adjacent residential neighborhoods.
- **Growing downtown must relate to enhancing retail, which suggests a housing focus and basis for convenience retail.** In truth, given demand, downtown not only has the opportunity to grow its retail inventory but also its housing and office space. Considering the anticipated parking and retail impacts of such development, downtown housing would be the preferred strategy over office. This approach is further substantiated by the fact that downtown is really about serving Rye residents, not becoming a major employment center. Additionally, Rye lacks a real diversity of housing options, so downtown living could prove an attractive alternative. There are currently some upstairs housing units but the supply is very limited. Rye also has in-town living immediately north and south of the study area. There is likely a strong market for luxury housing for empty nesters, given Rye's prominent address, walkability, and proximity to transit. This market niche was illustrated in the recent attempt to convert the approximately 100 rental units at Highland Hall to luxury condominium units. A proximal downtown resident population would help to define the street life and would certainly boost foot traffic and retail sales.

Side streets are clearly the most logical locations for new residential development, given that Purchase Street is fully built out and there are softer sites (e.g., vacant lots, surface parking, and underutilized parcels) on the side streets. Wherever appropriate, mixed use developments should be encouraged, with ground floor retail required.

- **Blind Brook is a latent asset that impacts development along portions of Locust Avenue and Elm Place.** Blind Brook is a waterway that runs between Elm Place and Locust Avenue. Currently, this unique natural resource is not utilized in recreational or scenic way, and does not have any relationship to downtown's retail core. It is clear that this feature should be "sunshined" as a public amenity and offers a great placemaking opportunity. As appropriate adjacent uses are paramount, future development along Locust and Elm will need to take into consideration the relationship with the brook. Major ideas for capitalizing on this feature include creating a trail along the edge and allowing restaurants with al fresco dining on the adjacent parcels.
- **City-owned parcels present additional opportunities for redevelopment that could enrich downtown uses.** There are a large number of sites in downtown that are publicly owned, as depicted in Map 7. At the City's discretion, Rye might consider allowing development of some of its public property, via a request for proposal, to meet other important goals. For example, there is an opportunity for the city to utilize zoning incentives to enable housing to cross-subsidize a convenience retail space and help to grow and in-fill downtown's side streets. Some percentage of affordable housing units might also be considered, which would likely be geared at middle income or workforce housing (given the high Area Median Income), enabling Rye's public service professionals, e.g., police, fire, government workers, teachers, to live in the City.

II. PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS

Vitality and Retail Mix

Vision Statement

Make Rye an even better, more diverse place while enhancing community character.

Goals

- Promote mixed-use to foster social interaction and placemaking
- Diversify retail mix to include more convenience retail
- Increase foot traffic to strengthen existing downtown businesses

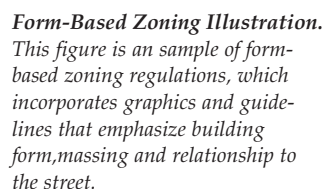
Recommended Strategies

1. **Update use classifications.** The City of Rye should revisit and review the use classifications for the B-1 and B-2 zoning districts to ensure that undesirable uses are not permitted as-of-right in the downtown area. Clearer definitions of use classifications are likely to be necessary. This clarification will allow the City to have a better track record of anticipating and preventing undesirable uses, as occurred with the proliferation of banks. Since the use classifications in the zoning ordinance have not been updated in decades, the City will be able to capitalize on the last 20 years or so of zoning innovations and improvements as it clarifies the use language and parameters. In the process of updating, it is important to anticipate the unintended consequences which may occur from limiting uses.
2. **Allow outdoor dining on side streets (Locust Avenue, Elm Place, Smith Street, and Purdy Avenue), along Blind Brook, and on the backside of Purchase Street buildings.** This measure is responsive to the market since outdoor dining is desired by existing restaurateurs as well as downtown shoppers. By permitting outdoor dining on the sidewalks of the side streets, the regulation would purposefully aim to direct restaurant development to the side streets, opening up inventory on Purchase Street and further enlivening and extending downtown along its other "branches". Outdoor dining would also be an amenity to Rye residents, adding to downtown's social ambiance as a meeting place. Additionally, by specifically allowing outdoor dining along Blind Brook, the regulation aims to highlight it as a unique natural resource and to shape the character of development along its edge.

3. **Identify and sponsor a series of small-scale local events and festivals for downtown.** Local events and festivals are desirable over regional-level events since Rye does not want to grow into a regional destination. Local events would serve downtown's primary clientele, Rye residents. Small, frequent local events such as farmer's markets, are useful for reaching a consistent audience, week after week. Specialized events, like holiday-related fairs or food festivals, should also be considered. These local events have the joint benefit of bolstering business sales and enriching the social spirit of downtown. Additionally, these occasions increase foot traffic in downtown, which has been an issue for some years. This initiative can be implemented rather simply by creating the space for events and making it available, e.g., one of the parking lots or the closure of a side street. As with farmers markets, the biggest and best have generally started out as the love children of a few enthusiasts. Modest events will help to incrementally build confidence in the direction of downtown, while primarily serving local residents.
4. **Provide concierge service at the train station.** Downtown businesses do not currently capitalize on the commuter market segment. Commuters represent a significant, but narrowly focused, market for retail goods and services. If each commuter spent approximately \$25 a week in downtown, it would generate significant business. This demand peaks in the early morning and late afternoon, and would focus on limited retail: cleaners, coffee shops, florists, and drug stores. One approach for providing train station goods and services is a concierge service, which has been successfully pioneered in a number of New Jersey Transit rail stations. The service would help bolster support for existing retailers, and in particular, provide an added income stream for convenience retailers in downtown. With the concierge service, commuters could drop off their dry cleaning in the morning or place orders from local merchants for food and other goods. During the day, the concierge service fulfills these orders, which are available in the afternoon when the commuters return. A fee is charged for the service; however, so far, these services have proved popular with busy commuters. In some cases, the concierge company is formed by the Chamber of Commerce and local businesses.
5. **Infill Purdy Avenue and Elm Place as a second "Main Street", with tweaks with regard to parking and other regulations to make this more possible.** Current zoning allows for mixed use development in the scale and vain of Purchase Street along Purdy Avenue and Elm Place. However, whereas there are no parking requirements for development on Purchase Street, the parking requirements for development on Purdy Avenue are more onerous north of Second Street. Therefore, refining parking requirements and addressing other regulatory aspects that hinder development should be pursued. Infilling Purdy Avenue and Elm Place is important for growing downtown and increasing overall retail inventory. Purdy Avenue is the logical side street to build out as a second Main Street due to the existing retail along this strip, the number of soft development sites, the anchor role that the CVS store and Post Office play at the eastern end of the street (creating an L-shaped downtown), and the proximity to the train station and parking. Essentially, these regulations would help to extend the "Purchase Street charm" all the way up to Boston Post Road. The increase in retail inventory along the Purdy Avenue would help to bring down rents by adding to the supply of retail space. Also, rents on Purdy and Elm would be lower than on Purchase Street since it is a less prime location. This rent differentiation would encourage greater retail diversity; convenience retailers and mom and pop shops might be able to afford the lower rents on Purdy and Elm. In addition to retail diversity and inventory, infill development on Purdy Avenue would serve to increase the real estate tax revenue generated by downtown. Conceivably, the same concept could be extended through McCullough place (formerly Third Street), as a corridor to the train station.
6. **Expand downtown living/housing opportunities, with tweaks with regard to parking and other regulations to make this more possible.** Downtown residents help to define and shape the street-life of a downtown. The City has an opportunity to promote housing in the upper floors of existing downtown buildings (already permitted) and

New downtown housing is expected to attract young professionals and empty-nesters. Increasing the downtown residential population is expected to have a very positive impact on local businesses through an increase in foot traffic, an increase in local spending power, and greater support for convenience stores and services. Greater residential development downtown would also provide diversified housing options and opportunities for some degree of “affordable housing”, but really middle income housing given the context.

- Since more convenience retail is strongly desired in downtown and the existing high rents are prohibitive for these retailers, this approach focuses on mandating a designated space for convenience retail with a larger floor plate, to



be offered at the appropriate rent levels for attracting this type of retail. This arrangement would be secured through housing incentives (i.e., increased housing density) for private development, aimed at cross-subsidizing the convenience retail space. A convenience retailer at such a site would strengthen downtown with a new anchor. The associated housing would help contribute to the downtown residential population, bolstering foot traffic and the local customer base. Furthermore, from a housing perspective, it would help to diversify housing options in Rye, while growing downtown's property tax base.

8. **Employ form-based zoning to promote high-design quality and mixed-use redevelopment opportunity on Locust Avenue (five contiguous parcels in common ownership), at the Ford site, and the gas station along Theodore Fremd.** The three sites identified are “soft”, and likely to be redeveloped in the future. Appropriate contextual development is not guaranteed under the existing zoning. By drafting and adopting form-based zoning for these properties, the City of Rye can serve a Master Plan-like function of setting land use priorities, guiding the future development of downtown in character with the City's vision. Such regulations may offer an opportunity to come up with shared/coordinated parking for off-street parking requirements. For example, for the Locust Avenue site, the zoning can mandate or provide incentives for a brook-side trail and prescribe small., house-like development with shared central parking. In all cases, by supporting mixed use development, there will be increased opportunities for convenience retailers.
9. **Redevelopment opportunity: Consider RFP City-owned parcels proximate to train station for private development to advance other purposes (e.g., convenience retail on ground floor/affordable housing above).** In the long-term, consider partnering with the MTA with regard to consolidated / shared parking. The City of Rye owns several sites in proximity to the train station area, such as the police department building (for which a move to the publicly-owned former CVS site next to City Hall has been contemplated). The area proximal to the train station is ripe for mixed use development. The City might take advantage of this situation to RFP select publicly-owned sites to advance certain goals for downtown, while realizing a revenue-generating opportunity for the City. Essentially, this approach puts the City in the driver's seat in terms of ensuring certain goals for downtown like expanding retail and creating affordable housing. In issuing a proposal for sale of this property, the City might mandate a development program that increases retail through the introduction of a new anchor and creates a favorable percentage of affordable housing units. Rye has every reason to pursue this from a community-building perspective. It would be an opportunity to provide housing for the City's public servants - firefighters, teachers, police, community workers. It is also consistent with smart growth and transit-oriented development principles.

The above recommendations represent the consensus of the Task Force. The tables on the following pages provide a full list of strategies considered, some of which were deemed inappropriate.

VITALITY AND RETAIL MIX:

The following is a list of all the strategies related to Vitality and Retail Mix which were considered by the Task Force.

STRATEGY	UPSIDE	DOWNSIDE	RECOMMENDED ACTION
Update use classifications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Allows City to have a better track record anticipating and preventing undesirable uses, as what happened with banks Takes advantage of 20+ years of improvement in how to zone 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Takes care; e.g., beware of unintended consequences 	– <i>Recommended</i>
Legislate retail mix by restricting use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Directs regulatory intervention in retail balance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides no guarantee of attracting desired uses Reactionary (versus incentive-based) approach to market Impact is constrained by limited retail inventory and store turnover Lack of successful models 	– <i>Not recommended.</i> (Except for problematic uses that might emerge in the future, as banks proved to be)
Increase and enhance sidewalk sales	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increases foot traffic Supports existing retail Creates a social event Expands on success of sales 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Requires great merchant coordination and buy-in that will be difficult to secure Caters to the comparison retailer 	– <i>Not recommended</i> as too contentious relative to payback.
Allow al fresco (outdoor) dining on side streets (Locust, Elm, Smith, Purdy) along Blind Brook and on backside of Purchase Street buildings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Desired by existing restaurateurs Will direct restaurant development to side streets Adds an amenity for Rye residents; especially in terms of downtown's social ambiance as a meeting place "Sunshines" a unique natural resource 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Narrow sidewalks might mean temporary parking spot closures Need to amend zoning to carry out 	– <i>Recommended, easy regulation change.</i>
Improve window displays and merchandising	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strengthens existing businesses to weather market changes Improves character/appearance of downtown 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Requires outside expertise, unless Rye volunteers can help Needs entity to oversee Does not actually help diversify retail; rather it strengthens existing comparison and dining orientation 	– <i>Not recommended</i>
Identify and sponsor a series of small-scale local events/festivals for downtown	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Serves local market, Rye residents Bolsters businesses Social event Increase foot traffic Opportunity for family/kid-oriented activities Can be done by simply creating the space and making it available, e.g., one of the parking lots Opportunity to build confidence in the direction of downtown while primarily serving local residents. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Needs entity to oversee / run Does not directly impact retail mix Need to be vigilant to avoid the temptation to enlarge events, with attendant traffic/etc. impacts 	– <i>Recommended</i> as an adjunct of events that would still take place, e.g., at the library. Emphasis on calendar more than on expense of sponsorship.
Create regional-level event in downtown (annual or seasonal)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grows downtown as a destination Bolsters existing comparison and dining businesses by tapping into a wider trade area Elevates downtown's image 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduces Rye's sense of exclusivity Does not actually help diversify retail; rather it strengthens existing comparison and dining orientation 	– <i>Not recommended</i> as downtown is not suffering and residents are basically happy with it however much they would like to see improvements in store mix

Provide marketing support to existing businesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Focuses on saving downtown's institutions - Opportunity to share resources between merchants - Potential to stymie retail loss, albeit limited (example of flower shop) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Needs entity to oversee / run - Does not actually help diversify retail; rather it strengthens existing comparison and dining orientation 	- <i>Not recommended.</i> (Other than to stay alert for opportunities to provide positive news about downtown, e.g., press releases for downtown enhancements.)
Pursue a tenant recruitment strategy aimed at attracting desired retail tenants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Takes a proactive approach to diversifying retail mix - Attempts to identify the specific types of retail desired in downtown 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Typically a significant effort, with low success rate - Needs a dedicated staff person to oversee - Lack of tolerance for rent subsidy (although highest bidder may not be the desired retailer) - Limited retail inventory to work with. - Effort may run counter to macro retail trends 	- <i>Not recommended.</i>
Provide concierge service at the train station.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provides added income for convenience retailers in downtown 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Goes up against reluctance to intervene in the marketplace - Had existed for drycleaning, but is now defunct. 	- <i>Recommended.</i> with restriction that it must be Rye-based businesses
Infill Purdy Street and Elm Place as a second "Main Street", with tweaks with regard to parking and other regulations to make this more possible	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Increases downtown retail inventory - Rent differentiation encourages greater retail diversity - Extends Purchase Street charm up to Boston Post Road - Increases the real estate tax revenue generated by downtown 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Depends on quixotic private sector investment - Changes character by growing downtown beyond Purchase - Triggers controversy - Likely should be linked to height / design standards to assure small-scale environment 	- <i>Recommended.</i> Note that it is already allowed by zoning.
Expand downtown living / housing opportunities, with tweaks with regard to parking and other regulations to make this more possible	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Increases foot traffic and customer base - Promotes convenience stores and services - Provides "affordable" (really middle-income) and diversified housing options - Increases slightly the real estate tax revenue generated by downtown 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Increases density and building height in downtown - Changes character of downtown, specifically taller buildings - Triggers a great deal of controversy - Likely should be linked to height / design standards to assure small-scale environment 	- <i>Recommended</i>
Employ form-based zoning to induce convenience retail through housing incentives (e.g., one extra floor), with mandatory retail floor plate/convenience use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Increases convenience retail with new anchor - See all of the advantages for #10 and #11, above 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - See #11 and #12, above 	- <i>Recommended</i> for north side of Elm, on Purdy, and adjoining train station
Employ form-based zoning to promote high-design quality and mixed-use redevelopment opportunity on Locust Avenue, at the Ford site, and gas station along Theodore Fremd	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Serves a "Master Plan" function of setting site-specific land use priorities - Guides future development of downtown in character with the City's vision - Can come up with shared / coordinated parking with the off-street parking - Can mandate or provide incentives for brookside trail. - Form-based development can mandate small, house-like development with shared central parking. - See #10 and #11, above 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - See #11 and #12, above 	- <i>Recommended.</i> This is a high-priority action, as Locust Avenue / Elm Place assemblage is ready for development at a now-inappropriate scale.
Redevelopment opportunity: Consider RFP City-owned parcels	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provides revenue-generating opportunity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Creates competing interests/uses for the same 	- <i>Recommended.</i>

proximate to train station for private development to advance other purposes (e.g., convenience retail on ground floor/affordable housing above). In the long-term, consider partnering with the MTA with regard to consolidated / shared parking.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Puts Village in driver seat to ensure that certain goals for downtown are realized - See #10 and #11, above 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - property - Goes up against reluctance to intervene in the marketplace - May overflow into debate with regard to relocating police station - See #11 and #12, above 	
Create a retail incubator project, perhaps geared to convenience goods and services, such as a small public market	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Expands retail diversity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Requires subsidized space and an entity to operate/oversee - Retail more likely to have a specialty focus than convenience - Incubator may not be appropriate for such a successful downtown (high rents means graduating out of Rye) 	<i>Not recommended.</i> Difficult to administer, tenant recruitment issue.



III. MAIN STREET MANAGEMENT STREETScape AND DESIGN

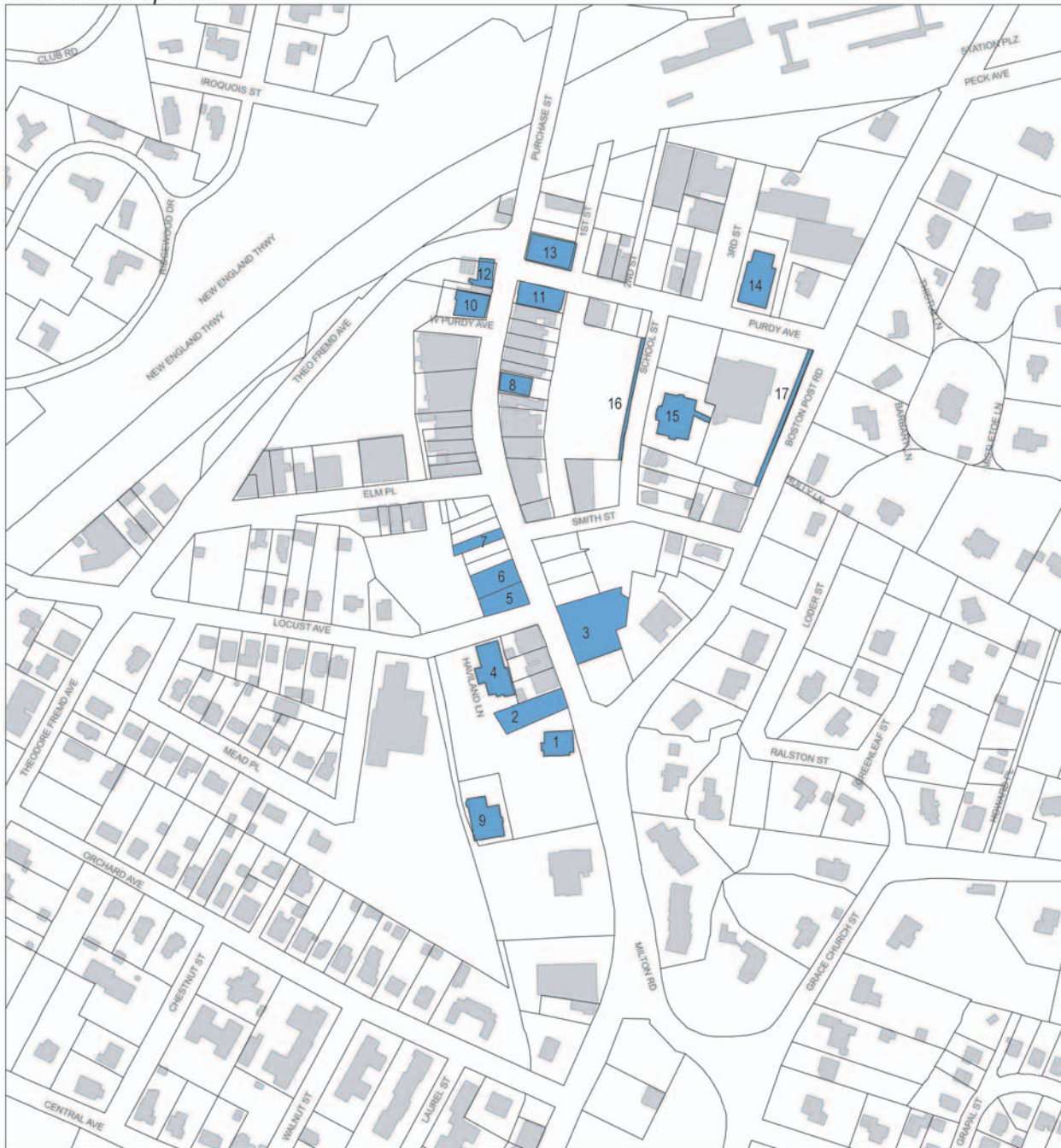
I. ANALYSIS

Urban Design

Rye shoppers recognize downtown's charm, attractiveness and walkability as among its greatest strengths.

- **The coveted charm and small town feeling of downtown are a reflection of its quality urban design.** In fact, small downtowns, like Rye, are coming back precisely because they offer more atmosphere and sense of place. Rye is a very attractive downtown – walkable and compact with a real “main street”. There is quaintness in its scale and feel, which is nicely mirrored in its small store fronts. There are numerous old growth trees along Purchase Street that add to the character. Downtown undoubtedly has desirable urban design/aesthetics: human-scaled building heights, mixed architecture, abundant sunlight, historic buildings, and a natural bend in Purchase Street that creates varied visual experiences on the corridor.
- **The desired urban design enhancements for downtown are about reinforcing sense of place and tackling maintenance issues.** Rye shoppers are pleased with downtown from a design perspective and appreciate its appearance. In the 2006 shoppers survey, they only compare Rye to other attractive, upscale locations like Scarsdale and Greenwich. Areas of concern highlighted include sanitation (litter, dumpsters, etc.) and pedestrian safety (poor crossings, narrow sidewalks). As for other improvements, it is simply a matter of tweaking elements of the urban design and streetscape. It is really a question of whether downtown can be made even better. Therefore, urban design measures pursued in downtown should be focused on place-making and community character. This social sense of downtown is consistent with Downtown's growing identity as a meeting place. Design interventions must preserve the small-town sense of place. Recommendations are about beautifying not redesigning downtown. Such beautification, sanitation and operational tweaks and oversight is often referred to broadly as “Main Street Management.” Rye is well-positioned for the formation of an entity such as a business improvement district (BID) to manage these facets of downtown.
- **Ensuring contextual design and maintaining historic scale in new construction and rehabilitation is a concern.** As previously stated, Downtown Rye has an attractive scale and design character. Although Purchase Street is largely built out, redevelopment or rehabilitation of properties over time is likely. Also, there

MAP 8 Historic Properties



Legend

- Historic Buildings
- 11 Number corresponds to the list on the following page



Sources: City of Rye GIS Data
Westchester County GIS Data
Phillips Preiss Shapiro Associates, Inc. 2006

Historic Properties

1. Square House
2. The Arcade Building (1909), 15 Purchase Street
3. The Mooney Building (1928), 22 Purchase Street
4. Firehouse (1909)
5. Former Lyceum, 31-33 Purchase Street
6. 36 Purchase Street (1915)
7. 43 Purchase Street
8. Former Max Frieze Building (1904), 66-68 Purchase Street
9. Rye Free Reading Room (1913)
10. Former Rye Trust Company (1923), 77 Purchase Street
11. Former Rye National Bank (1901), 86 Purchase Street
12. Budd Building (1871), 83-85 Purchase Street
13. 88 Purchase Street
14. Post Office (1930s), 41 Purchase Street
15. 16 School Street (1910)
16. Stone wall around Carpet Trends Parking Lot
17. WPA stone wall around CVS (1936)



(1)



(2)



(3)



(4)



(9)



(10)



(11)



(12)



(13) on right



(14)



(15)



(17)

are a number of developable parcels on the side streets. Some of the parameters for development allowed under existing zoning may be inconsistent with the character that Rye would like to preserve in downtown. To ensure that the existing urban design character is preserved, height limitations in downtown's zoning districts should be revisited. Additionally, some residents have raised concerns over new development that is considered not contextually appropriate (e.g., Commerce Bank). Therefore, design guidelines might be suitable to ensure more structured design review of rehabilitated or redeveloped properties.

Pedestrian/Circulation

Despite its small-scale and walkability, there is a need to improve the pedestrian-level experience.

- **The lack of pedestrian amenities is a major concern.** Successful downtowns differentiate themselves from auto-oriented shopping centers by providing a quality pedestrian experience. Downtown Rye is not quite there yet: shoppers pointed out the need for safer crosswalks, improved sidewalks, pedestrian signals and other enhancements. Rye's off grid-street pattern in downtown is good for slowing traffic and makes it ripe for traffic calming inventions, which slow traffic but do not reduce volume. Some segments of sidewalk are also in disrepair and require fixing. Pedestrian-scaled lighting would further enhance the downtown pedestrian experience.
- **The major corridors in downtown are Purchase Street, followed by Boston Post Road which functions as a bypass.** Most of the traffic flows on these two roadways. Although narrow, Purchase Street has two way traffic, one lane in each direction, with on-street parking on both sides of the street. This pattern is essential since Purchase is the retail spine of downtown. Nearly all of the side streets in downtown are also two-way, many with on-street parking allowed. These attributes contribute to the character of the CBD. First Street, Second Street, and West Purdy Avenue are the exceptions with one-way traffic flow. Circulation of the Metro north station (south side) is a bit muddled given the relatively poor delineation of circulation. The station area functions as a thru street, not just a parking lot, and there are likely occasions when thru traffic, parked commuters and pedestrians are in conflict. Barring the station and signalization issues, roadway circulation patterns on downtown streets appear to function well.

Historic Assets

Downtown's historic character is a major part of what makes Rye so attractive.

- **Downtown Rye has historic scale and buildings, yet a degree of variety.** Rye is an historic downtown area, with many turn-of-the-century buildings dating to the first two decades of the 20th century. A full inventory of the historic properties in downtown is provided in Map 8 and the adjoining index. Many of the historic buildings are two- and three-stories, with authentic detailing and slightly eclectic architecture. There are some distinctive structures, such as the Arcade building which is oriented away from Purchase Street toward the Village Green. Despite its historic fabric, there exists a remarkable variety of building and roof lines. There are flat neoclassical roofs, mansard roofs and pitched roofs, all from the same general era. Most of the newer buildings in downtown were built between the First and Second World Wars. The 1930's-era structures like the Post Office and the WPA stone wall will likely start to be viewed as historic. Rye's architecture has proved to be a resilient and adaptive, adjusting to the present day needs for downtown. Downtown also has a notable historic configuration: downtown culminates in the Village Green and Civic Cluster at the foot of Purchase Street, an ideal civic-oriented configuration that would be hard to replicate today.

Vision Statement

Reinforce Rye's charm and small-town feel.

- **There are no local protections in place for preserving historic architecture in downtown.** Although there are a number of historic landmark buildings, this status does not ensure preservation of these properties. One issue with creating historic preservation legislation with more teeth, i.e., creating a local historic district designation for downtown, is obtaining property owner consent.

Goals

- Improve pedestrian environment and street-level experience
- Preserve historic character and ensure contextual development
- Manage traffic flow but increase pedestrian safety

Recommended Strategies

1. **Decorate storefronts with flower pots and/or other unifying element(s).** Small beautifying elements or streetscape gestures can produce a powerful visual impact in aggregate, for relatively minimal expense. Additionally, such an initiative is easy to implement and serves as a visual cue of downtown's beautification efforts.
2. **Purchase Street: Plant trees and increase landscaping.** Purchase Street has an attractive, fine-grain quality to its streetscape that is reinforced by a number of old-growth trees along the stretch, although not uniformly planted. Additional landscaping and planting of trees in strategic locations along this main strip strengthens the small-town feeling and pedestrian scale. An attractively landscaped Purchase Street further serves as a beautified gateway treatment as it would provide a sense of arrival when approaching downtown.
3. **Plant trees and increase landscaping on side streets.** As with landscaping and tree-planting on Purchase Street, the greening of downtown's sides streets will help to soften the streetscape, provide shade and reinforce a small-town atmosphere. Importantly, extending the landscaped quality of Purchase Street to the side streets is perhaps one of the strongest and most effective ways to visually knit in the sides streets as part of downtown. There is the opportunity to gradually implement this initiative with a few trees each year, realizing a high impact over the long term.
4. **Landscape municipal parking lots.** Although downtown's municipal parking lots are functional as-is, landscaping these areas would enhance the overall aesthetics of downtown. However, significant landscaping could compromise some parking spaces, so a trade off would be involved. It may be possible to link any landscaping initiative in these lots with opportunities to introduce environmentally sensitive design, such as, the use of permeable pavement and the reduction in heat island effect.
5. **Enhance Metro North parking lot.** Currently the Metro North station is rather unadorned and lacks landscaping and well defined circulation. The introduction of landscaping, pedestrian safety and other improvements in the train parking lots would elevate the train station to more of a downtown gateway given the image boost, as well as the sheer proximity to downtown. There may be opportunities to leverage funding for this initiative by working in concert with Metro North on this front. Landscaping may also serve a traffic calming function and make the station area parking lot more amenable to pedestrians.
6. **Nightlight signature downtown buildings.** This opportunity is about celebrating and showcasing Rye's architecture and historic past. By focusing on the nighttime appearance of downtown, it also acknowledges that Rye has become a true night destination, associated with its burgeoning restaurant row. Nightlighting of signature

edifices is a powerful imaging tactic, making Rye an inviting and memorable downtown at night. If key buildings are identified at arrival points, nightlighting can also serve a gateway function.

7. **Improve sanitation and street/sidewalk cleaning.** Cleanliness is at the core of imaging, making sanitation a pillar of downtown management. Currently, there is a perception that refuse and sidewalk appearance are an issue in downtown. By addressing this issue head-on through improved and expanded upkeep and garbage collection, Rye will be responding to these concerns while realizing an even more attractive downtown.
8. **Replace existing dumpsters with “green” dumpsters, which compact/compost garbage to produce electricity.** The largest aspect of the sanitation problem is the upkeep and appearance of dumpsters behind Purchase Street, typically those associated with restaurants and food refuse. With the increasing number of restaurants likely to continue, this issue is only certain to become more aggravated. By going with “green” or environmentally progressive refuse containers, Rye would be mitigating this situation while recognizing a degree of social responsibility. It could serve as a demonstration project showcasing environmental consciousness in Rye and provide an image boost to downtown. The costs for purchasing these dumpsters could be shared between business owners.
9. **Fix/repair sidewalks.** Several sections of sidewalk are in disrepair and need to be addressed as pedestrian safety and comfort in downtown is paramount to creating a desirable downtown. Of course, there is also a duty and interest on the City’s part in maintaining infrastructure. Any public works project that impacts roadways and sidewalks in downtown should also calculate in the needed sidewalk improvements in affected areas. Completing sidewalk fixes would help to enhance the overall pedestrian atmosphere of downtown.
10. **Beautify cut-thru corridors to parking lots.** Downtown has several cut-thru pedestrian corridors between the municipal lots and Purchase Street. These uninviting, non-descript passages do not equate with the overall quality of the downtown shopping experience. Also, they serve as major pedestrian gateways to downtown, and in that sense, they are failing to announce Rye appropriately. By beautifying these corridors, it improves the overall shopper experience. This element also deserves particular attention given the increased importance of Rye as a nighttime destination. At night, attractive lighting in these entryways will become essential. Since the range of potential beatification measures is wide, e.g., a painted mural, it is possible to pursue this recommendation with minimal investment.
11. **Improve crosswalks.** Downtown pedestrian crossings in their current state are considered unsatisfactory. As noted prior, downtown’s design, circulation and streetscape should be focused on the pedestrian sphere. Restriping crosswalks is one fast and inexpensive way to improve pedestrian crossings by helping to draw drivers’ attention to these crossings. This approach is an effective interim measure for dealing with pedestrian safety. The longer term strategy would be to introduce new paving materials for crosswalks as part of major road improvements. Mid-block crossings should also be considered where appropriate.
12. **Install crosswalk signals along Purchase Street.** The introduction of crosswalk signals is really an imperative for pedestrian safety and is the only long-term solution to the pedestrian crossing issue. With better, safer crossings and in turn, a more desirable pedestrian environment, it is likely that downtown will experience an increase in foot traffic.
13. **Introduce uniform/upgraded street furniture and receptacles.** A uniform streetscape vocabulary accomplished through streamlined street furniture and receptacles is an important way to establish a sense of place

This map shows a residential area with a red boundary line. The streets visible include New England Thruway, Purdy Ave, Smith St, Elm Pl, and others. Buildings are color-coded in green, yellow, and blue. A red line outlines a specific area within the neighborhood.

 No data  2 1/2 story  Study area
 1 story  3 story
 1 1/2 story  4 story
 2 story



Sources: City of Rye GIS Data
Westchester County GIS Data
Phillips Preiss Shapiro Associates, Inc. 2006

MAP 10 Circulation



Legend

-  Traffic Direction on Main Streets
-  Turning Lanes
-  Traffic Direction in Parking Lots
-  Traffic Lights



Sources: City of Rye GIS Data
Westchester County GIS Data
Phillips Preiss Shapiro Associates, Inc. 2006

and would enhance downtown's urban design. Currently, the existing street furniture is considered unacceptable so a transformation of this sort would provide a notable facelift. The appropriate street furniture could help to announce and reinforce Rye as a place for social interaction, and may prove to help generate increased foot traffic.

14. **Pursue traffic-calming in downtown.** Traffic-calming is the term for a host of different measures (e.g., neck-downs/bump-outs, raised crosswalks/intersections, pedestrian refuges, speed bumps or tables, etc.) which are aimed at slowing traffic to create safer streets and creating a more pedestrianized environment near roadways. Pursuing traffic calming in some form on Purchase Street would help to reinforce the Main Street atmosphere. Some measures like bump-outs can even increase the amount of sidewalk space for street furniture. Additionally, slower traffic flow could translate into increased business for downtown establishments, as drivers become aware of previously unnoticed stores. Like crosswalk signals, traffic calming is part of the long-term strategy for pedestrian safety.
15. **Prepare road repair guidelines.** With aging infrastructure, Purchase Street needs significant subsurface capital improvements. As identified in the Purchase Street Streetscape Study (2002), the overhead lights on Purchase Street should be phased out. Streetscape improvements to the street should be pursued in tandem with capital improvements. Therefore, it is recommended that the City of Rye adopt guidelines for roadway repairs which link new capital investments on the county, state and federal level with high impact improvements to downtown as a way to leverage and coordinate investments. By drafting guidelines for repair, the City can ensure that roadway repairs include certain key elements (e.g., pedestrian-scaled lighting, buried utility wires) that will enhance downtown as a Main Street. This approach represents the long-term strategy for major streetscape improvements.
16. **Form a Business Improvement District (BID) and/or Local Improvement District.** A Business Improvement District (BID) is a proven model for Central Business District enhancement. It is a public/private partnership in which property and business owners elect to make a collective contribution (by special assessment) to the maintenance, development and promotion of the commercial district. BIDs are modeled after the shared maintenance programs at malls. A BID delivers supplemental funding and / or services – sanitation, maintenance, marketing, capital improvements, and beautification – to the designated district.

Creating a BID in Downtown Rye would enable property owners to pool resources for major improvements. As a self-sustaining organization, the BID will provide a revenue stream for essential implementation of capital budget items, as well as an entity for maintenance of proposed beautification / streetscape measures. The BID can oversee implementing all Main Street Management measures in downtown. Once formed, it can also be linked to other revenue sources (see following recommendation). Given the size of the Rye Central Business District, any BID created will be small or moderate in size (i.e., more about expanding funding than about staffing for services).

17. **Utilize parking funds to seed downtown improvements through BID (see aforementioned recommendation).** Parking funds from the downtown pay stations are the logical funding source for The Business Improvement District. Furthermore, it reinforces the connection between a downtown use (i.e., parking) and downtown improvements. Parking funds would serve to augment the operating budget of the organization by an additional \$100,000, improving the saliency and viability of the BID as an organization. Furthermore, support from the City for diverting the parking funds to the BID demonstrated the City's willingness to do its share to support the BID. It also adds an additional layer of oversight and accountability by having City money invested in downtown.

18. **Draft design guidelines for new development/rehab to ensure contextual development.** The current zoning does not provide enough protection in terms of preserving Rye's character over the long term. Looking to successful models in other communities, one way to address this issue is for the City to draft and adopt urban design guidelines for downtown. Guidelines will help prevent out-of-scale/out-of-character development without prohibiting development. It will also help pave the way for less ambiguous design and architectural review. This is particularly important, particularly in the absence of a local historic district designation. Guidelines might include limitations on building heights (e.g., three stories / 35 feet, whichever is less in B-2 district, namely Purchase Street) and prescribe minimum amounts of windows / plate glass. The idea is to preserve and reinforce character not create uniformity – for example, individualistic names and signage remain important. Eclectic is exciting in downtown, and need not be compromised with design guidelines.
19. **Draft form-based zoning (indicating specific design solutions for specific sites).** Form-based zoning is a method of land use regulation characterized by 1) an emphasis on physical design (building size, location, appearance) rather than land use/function (e.g., residential, commercial, industrial) and 2) a focus on what is desired—the kind of development and district character that people indicate they want— rather than what is forbidden. The end goal is producing a specific type of “place.” Form-based zoning is particularly well-suited for promoting development in built out communities, allowing mixed uses and the flexibility to respond to economic changes.

The City should identify the key development sites in downtown and draft and adopt appropriate form-based zoning for those sites. It is clear that the **five contiguous parcels in common ownership on Locust Avenue should be the top priority site**. With form-based zoning, the City can be assured that future development will conform to an appropriate downtown building typology and orientation. It can also help to induce certain types of development like upstairs living. Going to a form-based model is in line with the most current approaches to zoning.

The above recommendations represent the consensus of the Task Force. The tables on the following pages provide a full list of strategies considered, some of which were deemed inappropriate.

MAIN STREET MANAGMENT:

The following is a list of all the strategies related to Main Street Management which were considered by the Task Force.

STRATEGY	UPSIDE	DOWNSIDE	RECOMMENDED ACTION
Decorate storefronts with flower pots and/or other unifying element(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Low-cost and affordable Easy to implement Visual cue of downtown's beautification efforts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintenance concerns Relatively minor impact Requires Village allocation of time and money (e.g., from parking fund), albeit limited, every year; and/or BID 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Recommended.</i>
Purchase Street: Plant trees and increase landscaping	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> High impact over time, planting a few each year A little money will go a long way Reinforces small-town feel 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Requires Village allocation of time and money (e.g., from parking fund), albeit limited, every year; and/or BID 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Recommended, Purchase Street already well-landscaped, just fine tuning</i>
Side streets: Plant Trees and increase landscaping	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> High impact over time, planting a few each year A little money will go a long way Effective way to knit in the side streets 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> See #2, above 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Recommended, if pursued in a focused way (e.g., start with Purdy Street, and later others streets, prioritized by development and retail potential)</i>
Landscape municipal parking lots	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Further beautification of downtown Can be linked to environmentally sensitive design, e.g., porous pavement, reduction of heat islands 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Functional as-is Not high priority given rear orientation of lots Involves public expense in a fiscally conservative city Potential to lose more than a handful of parking spaces 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Recommended, in the long-term. Landscaping funds should be used in the most visible locations first</i>
Entrance MetroNorth parking lot	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Upgrades train station to more of a downtown gateway Opportunity to leverage Metro North funds May serve to pedestrianize this area 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Exasperates road maintenance issue between MetroNorth and City Involves public expense in a fiscally conservative city Investment may need to be revisited if area is redeveloped or if structured parking is built Inefficient to do without improvements to landscaping at same time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Recommended provided that MetroNorth will cover half (+/-) of the expense; and that development is unlikely</i>
Nightlight signature downtown buildings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Celebrates Rye's historic assets Acknowledges that Rye has become a night destination Powerful imaging Can serve a gateway function, depending on the building 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Involves public expense or "champion" Likely triggers opposition by a vocal few, e.g., neighbor across the street, Dark Sky advocates, et.al. Outside expertise is likely necessary 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Recommended, unless it becomes a lightning rod.</i>
Implement façade improvements on existing buildings that are out of character/scale (e.g., Commerce Bank)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Has cumulatively significant impact on community character Deals with a perceived threat to downtown Potential to work with property owners to cover costs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Functional as-is Involves public expense in a fiscally conservative city. Outside expertise is likely necessary, not only to do, but also to reduce squabbling in the community Can lead to homogenization, which is the outcome if right design review / talent is not employed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Not recommended. The design review can do as well with an amortization clause for signage as allowed by State law.</i>
Improve sanitation and street/sidewalk cleaning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Responds to concerns about refuse and cleanliness as threats to downtown. Ensures good imaging. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Functional as-is Needs an entity to oversee and implement Requires Village allocation of 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Recommended, important to Rye sense of haven</i>

		time and money (e.g., from parking fund), albeit limited, every year; and/or BID	
Replace existing dumpsters with “green” dumpsters, which compact/compost garbage to produce electricity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Deals directly with the largest sanitation problem - Serves as “model” or demonstration project for environmental consciousness in Rye - Allows for the proliferation of restaurants while mitigating cleanliness concerns - Costs could be shared with business owners - Boosts image - Recognizes a social responsibility 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - More expensive option - Green aspect goes beyond functional concerns 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Recommended</i>, important for Rye to demonstrate leadership and responsibility
Fix/repair sidewalks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Increases attractiveness of pedestrian sphere - Necessity to maintain infrastructure anyway (dual goals) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Functional as-is - Requires public funding in a fiscally conservative city 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Recommended</i>, as a matter of public safety and comfort.
Beautify cut-thru corridors to parking lots	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Improves shopper experience - Increased importance of Rye as a nighttime destination elevates import of these connections - Only requires minimal investment (mural, lighting, etc.) to beautify 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Functional as-is - Requires public funding in a fiscally conservative city 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Recommended</i>.
Upgrade/unify sidewalks with brick paving or similar	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - High visual impact, unifying downtown - Has worked in other locations to improve urban design - Relatively small size of Rye and great affluence of city makes this an option 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Very expensive option in a fiscally conservative city - Opportunity cost (both financial and political) in doing other lower cost improvements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Not recommended</i>.
Improve crosswalks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Low cost solution to draw attention to pedestrian crossings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Insufficient for pedestrian safety - Interim measure only - Requires public funding in a fiscally conservative city 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Recommended</i> as a stop-gap measure until crosswalk lights are installed.
Improve circulation of Train Station area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Enhances and improves pedestrian experience - Elevates this area as a gateway - Increases pedestrian and vehicular safety - Opportunity to leverage Metro North funds 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Involves public expense in a fiscally conservative city - Road maintenance issue between Metro North and City - Investment may need to be revisited if area is redeveloped or if structured parking is built - Inefficient to do without improvements to landscaping at same time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Not recommended for time being, either to be done in conjunction with landscaping and/or development and/or garage, or if financed or co-financed by MetroNorth</i>
Install crosswalk signals along Purchase Street	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Imperative for pedestrian safety (the clear long term solution) - Likely to help increase foot traffic 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Large capital cost in a fiscally conservative city 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Recommended</i> as it is a matter of public safety
Introduce uniform/upgraded street furniture and receptacles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Enhances urban design and place-making in downtown - Existing street furniture considered unacceptable – this would provide a notable facelift - Reinforces Rye as a place for social interaction with appropriate street furniture - Likely to increase foot traffic 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A full overhaul of street furniture would be a significant capital expense (likely necessitating a phased approach) in a fiscally conservative city 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Recommended</i>, but pursue low cost, high impact measures first.
Pursue traffic-calming in	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Makes pedestrians the 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Significant capital expense in a 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Recommended</i>,

downtown (e.g., neck-downs/bump-outs, raised crosswalks/intersections)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Enhances the Main Street atmosphere - Slower traffic flow may prove beneficial to business - Some investments like bump-outs can increase sidewalk space for street furniture 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - fiscally conservative city - Slows down traffic flow 	particularly, if wrapped into other roadway improvements. See roadway guidelines.
Prepare road repair guidelines: Revamp/replace underlying infrastructure on Purchase Street; Pursue new signalization of Purchase Street, Pedestrian-scaled lighting on Purchase Street; Bury overhead utility wires on side streets; Replace/reconstruct roadway on Purchase Street	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Links new capital investments on county, state and federal level with high impact improvements to downtown (leverages other investments) - Represents long-term strategy for major streetscape improvements - Ensures that roadway repairs include certain key elements that will enhance downtown as a Main Street - Cost-effective approach 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Requires working with other entities to ensure implementation over the long-term - Improvements contingent upon impending repairs - After a time, significant capital expense may still be needed 	- <i>Recommended</i> , guidelines read as a policy statement when dealing with DOT, etc.
Utilize parking funds to seed downtown improvements (through BID – see next recommendation)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Logical funding source in the range of \$100,000 to \$250,000 per year - Reinforces connection between downtown use (parking) and downtown improvements - Makes the BID more viable as an organization - Shows that the City is willing to do its share to support the BID, reducing controversy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Diverts parking funds from general budget - Unstable revenue stream as long-term viability of meters remains unknown 	- <i>Recommended</i> .
Form a Business Improvement District (BID) and/or Local Improvement District (same thing as a special assessment district)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Enables property owners to pool resources for major improvements - LID provides revenue stream for essential for implementation of capital budget items; BID provides entity for maintenance of most proposed beautification / streetscape measures - BID is self-sustaining - Proven models for CBD enhancement - Can be linked to other revenue sources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Triggers concern about expense being passed onto merchants (triple net rents), equal to about 10 percent of what the City now charges as a tax, yielding an average of \$500 annual increase - Triggers merchant opposition; needs champions - Question on whether size of Rye can warrant the formation of a BID without more development; current revenue stream approximates \$50,000 based on current assessment, half of the commonly accepted minimum 	- <i>Recommended</i> if other revenue sources can be secured, i.e., dedication of some of the parking revenue
Draft design guidelines for new development/rehab to ensure contextual development; e.g., limit buildings to three stories / 35 feet, whichever is less in B-2 district (Purchase); prescribe minimum amounts of windows / plate glass	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Preserves Rye’s character over the long term - Increases level of protection (current zoning does not provide enough) - Builds on successful models in similar communities - Prevents out-of-scale / out-of-character development without prohibiting development - Paves the way for less ambiguous design and architectural review 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Enforcement and implementation of guidelines might be a procedural problem - Only prevents the worst designs; cannot guarantee great design 	- <i>Recommended</i> . Downtown’s character is at risk without guidelines in place.
Draft form-based zoning (indicating specific design solutions for specific sites)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ensures that future development will conform to an appropriate downtown building typology and orientation - Induces certain types of 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provides greater flexibility of uses – does not restrict uses like traditional zoning - Needs buy-in from zoning/planning board - Requires funded design study 	- <i>Recommended</i> for specific sites, only; i.e., development on Locust/Elm assemblage; perhaps other sites such as Boston Post Road

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- development (i.e., more upstairs living) In line with the latest approaches to zoning		
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IV. PARKING MANAGEMENT

I. ANALYSIS

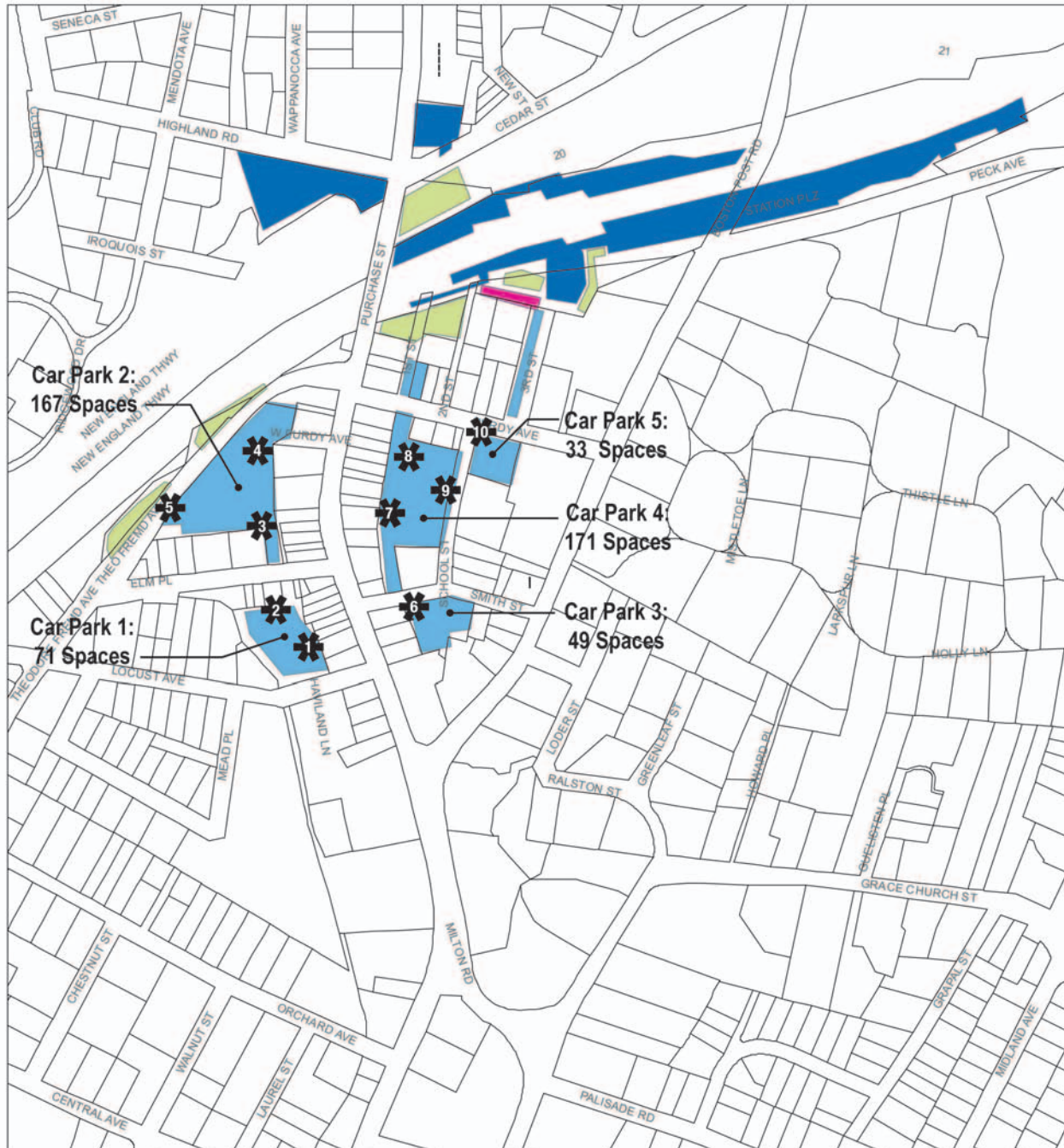
Parking Conditions

Parking has emerged as a critical issue to address for downtown's vitality.

- **Downtown parking issues are not new; increasing parking supply is the only viable long-term option.** There has been a major parking study of the CBD nearly every decade. Although residents and merchants alike are displeased with the parking situation (namely inadequate supply at peak hours), there is a lack of willingness to change this situation by increasing supply (e.g., building a parking deck) due to financial and community character concerns. Thus, more modest changes to parking management are likely to be the preferred course of action.
- **Off-street parking is fortunately concentrated in lots behind Purchase Street, offering convenience without compromising the small-town quality and pedestrian atmosphere of downtown.** There are nearly 500 off-street parking spaces distributed among five municipal parking lots. On-street parking spaces are also available on Purchase Street and the side streets, with one lane of parking on each side of the street. The southern portion of Purchase Street has the greatest need for parking, as this area is further away from the existing off-street parking lots. While off-street parking is comprised of pay parking spaces with a two-hour limit, on-street parking has a one-hour limit but does not require payment. The lack of meters on Purchase Street is really about retaining a certain community character even though available on-street parking is an issue for stores dependent on impulse buys. It is estimated that merchants lose approximately \$80,000 a year in business for each spot of on-street parking taken up by a merchant's vehicle. Merchant permits issued by the City help to encourage merchants and their employees to seek parking in off-street lots.
- **Parking remains a major concern.** Although parking is a typical complaint of merchants in any business district, Rye is unusual in that parking ranks as a top issue for both Rye merchants and residents. This finding suggests that, in fact, downtown likely has a parking problem. Notably, the greatest parking issue and highest demand period is midday on weekdays (i.e., lunchtime traffic), during which time available parking can be limited. Rye's parking crunch is evidence of downtown's success. For Rye's shoppers, more/better parking came

MAP 11

Parking



Legend

Parking

- Hourly Limit
- Metered
- Permit
- Restricted
- ✱ Parking Meter Location



Sources: City of Rye GIS Data
Westchester County GIS Data
Phillips Preiss Shapiro Associates, Inc. 2006

only second to the desire for greater retail diversity. However, more nuanced answers to the shopper survey reveal that the advent of parking meters (and the adjustment to this change) might be the source of some of the parking dissatisfaction among shoppers. For example, elimination of pay stations was the parking change most advocated by the shoppers surveyed.

- **The introduction of pay parking regulations was a notable shift for Rye, the outcome of which is still being analyzed.** On August 1, 2005, the City of Rye introduced a pay parking system, operating 10 pay stations for all off-street municipal parking in downtown. (see Map 11). After one full year of operation, the ten pay stations processed over 315,000 transactions and generated more than \$191,000 in revenue. Pay parking is a typical parking management tool, which helps to regulate downtown parking by ensuring appropriate turnover of vehicles. The pay stations allow a minimum payment of \$0.25 for thirty minutes of parking. (Note: Merchants are not required to use pay stations if they have a valid merchant permit.) Not surprisingly, the City has received some push back on this model, which is likely a matter of sticker shock and technology adjustment for users. But, parking in an affluent community should not be about revenue, it should be about fostering a prosperous business district by encouraging efficient use (i.e., vehicle turnover of limited parking spaces). Parking improvements are about serving the customer and business health, not about generating revenue for its own sake. Mindful of this goal, at least some if not all of the parking revenue collected should be linked to downtown improvements.
- **The pay stations have increased the City's understanding of downtown parking usage.** Based on an analysis of off-street parking usage based on one year of pay station transaction data, it appears that late July is the busiest time for downtown, with the highest parking demand and number of parking transactions coinciding with the Annual Sidewalk Sale. In general, May, June and September are the biggest months for pay station activity. Slow weeks coincide with school vacations. Typically, the end of the week has the greatest number of transactions in a given week – with Mondays having the fewest and Fridays the greatest. Even without the office worker traffic, Saturday parking demand and usage is also high. As evidence of its growing identity as an eating and drinking location, the busiest time of day and greatest period of parking use is between 10:30am and 2:30pm, indicating strong lunchtime traffic for restaurants and shops.
- **Addressing the parking problem in the near term is more a question of parking management than creating new supply.** Parking management is about tweaking regulations that impact the overall use of existing parking resources. Parking management should ensure the highest turnover for on-street parking and moderate turnover on nearest off-street lots. Given the high cost and likely community character concern with creating additional parking (e.g., a parking deck), management of existing assets becomes ever more critical. It is an issue of calibrating on-street parking to create the illusion of available parking on Purchase Street; i.e., there should be 15 or 30 minute parking in front of certain stores (e.g., post office, cleaners, etc.). A parking management strategy should determine the appropriate time calibration for different lots/spaces. All parking changes need to be determined and carried out in concert with merchants.
- **Expansion of parking resources is essentially about looking at publicly-owned sites for garages.** In the long-term, expanding the existing parking resources may be the only meaningful remedy for parking issues. Parking is not just about spaces for shoppers and restaurant-goers, but also for office workers, retail employees and even commuters (there are some 1,000 people on waiting list for Metro North parking at Rye station). One idea would be to create a central reservoir of parking where downtown shoppers could always find a space. It is likely that the least desirable spaces will be filled by some of those employee/merchants using the lots all day long. The City can not afford to construct such a facility using current parking funds, and would clear-

ly need to consider only those existing publicly-owned sites as potential future garage or parking deck sites. However, given the issue over parking meters, it is possible that a municipal parking deck or garage in downtown may be perceived as unpalatable, due to implementation costs and community character impacts.

II. PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS

Goals

Provide parking in character with community and community consensus on parking
Maximize customer parking convenience and ensure appropriate turnover

Recommended Strategies

- 1. Optimize enforcement of parking regulations, however they are formulated (see remainder of this section).** Inconsistent or unpredictable enforcement can be a frustration to downtown shoppers and can impact compliance with parking regulations. Optimizing enforcement is the key to effective parking management and ensuring that parking regulations are observed. Of course, overly strict enforcement can have its backlash in countering the easy-going small town ambiance. The objective of enforcement should be to help facilitate greater turnover of vehicles, which is critical to shopper convenience and business vitality.
- 2. Develop a parking management strategy; i.e., identify shared-parking opportunities, earmark remote spaces for sticker parking; search for worker parking outside of CBD.** A parking management plan can ensure that downtown Rye maximizes the use of its existing parking resources. It is an inexpensive, short-term solution to downtown's parking issues and can be implemented straightaway. Analysis of existing parking patterns and usage is essential for determining opportunities for parking management strategies such as shared parking arrangements. Shared parking can be very effective since different downtown uses peak at different times. Turnover is also important. Out of the 500 or so parking spaces downtown, over half of them are being used by workers with merchant permits. Clearly, full-day employee parking should be relegated to the most remote lots to ensure that the most convenient parking has the greatest turnover potential. Given the amount of parking used by workers, new strategies for merchant parking should be a focus of future parking management. For example, there is a need to create low cost parking options for merchants by providing spaces outside the CBD.
- 3. Calibrate existing parking system to better reflect convenience, turnover and use; analyze data from existing pay stations to better understand parking usage.** Calibrating the existing parking system is an essential component of an effective parking management plan. The data from the pay stations offer significant insight into downtown parking usage, not only in terms of peak hours and days of week, but also in terms of how each lot is utilized. By using this information to revisit existing parking regulations to adjust timing and cost, the City will enable the parking system to be optimized for the convenience of users. Recalibration should focus on ensuring the highest turnover for on-street parking and moderate turnover on nearest off-street lots. Again, this is a lower cost option for solving downtown's parking issues. With improved turnover, there is also likely to be less opposition to the parking meters because parking overall will be functioning better.
- 4. Consider a joint parking facility with Metro North near train station.** By pursuing a joint parking facility with Metro North near the train station, the City could share the costs of creating a parking facility by leveraging Metro North funds, while resolving the significant unmet demand for commuter parking at the train station. Given commuter peaks, a parking facility near the train station would offer shared parking opportunities with

Vision Statement

Provide ample and convenient parking, with sufficient turnover to support downtown businesses.

downtown shoppers. This idea is in line with other potential development opportunities that could be realized near the Metro North station area. Such a parking facility need not be a single use development, but rather a mixed-use development with retail and contextual urban design. This recommendation is contingent upon additional development in downtown and is a long-term measure that would likely not be pursued for another 10 or more years.

5. **Consider a central reservoir parking structure (parking deck in central portion of CBD).** As a long-term solution to parking capacity issues, the City could develop a central reservoir parking structure. This parking structure would serve as the “go-to” parking lot where shoppers would always expect to find a space. The logical location for such a facility would be the central portion of Purchase Street, and more specifically Parking Lot 4, between Smith and Purdy, where a parking deck could take advantage of the existing grade change in this area. By significantly increasing the parking supply, Rye would have the ability to absorb a much greater degree of new development in downtown. This parking facility should embody a contextual design and fit into the character of downtown, such as a garage with a liner building facing Smith Street to provide expanded retail and maintain pedestrian ambiance.
6. **Create public / shared parking opportunities in the southern portion of Purchase Street as part of any publicly initiated development in that vicinity.** The southern portion of downtown currently has the greatest parking need since the available off-street parking lots are farther from this section of downtown. Real estate professionals noted that the lack of parking in this area is affecting rents. The City owns some developable sites in downtown, namely the former CVS lot in the southern portion of Purchase Street adjacent to City Hall. The City should require a portion of the development be dedicated for public or shared parking. It may even be possible to take advantage of the slope at this site to create below-grade parking. The addition of accessible parking in this area will enhance the market for businesses towards the lower edge of Purchase Street. It could also help to relieve some of the pressures on the library’s parking.

The above recommendations represent the consensus of the Task Force. The tables on the following pages provide a full list of strategies considered, some of which were deemed inappropriate.

PARKING MANAGEMENT:

The following is a list of all the strategies related to Parking Management which were considered by the Task Force.

STRATEGY	UPSIDE	DOWNSIDE	RECOMMENDED ACTION
Optimize enforcement of parking regulations, however they are formulated (see remainder of this section)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recognizes that enforcement is key to effective parking management; ensures that parking regulations are observed Relieves user frustration with inconsistent enforcement Ensures greater turnover of vehicles 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Involves public expenditure for staffing Engenders discomfort: strict enforcement as not in line with the small-town character 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Recommended as prerequisite to any success with parking.</i>
Develop a parking management strategy; i.e., identify shared-parking opportunities, earmark remote spaces for sticker parking; search for worker parking outside of CBD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maximizes existing parking resources Provides an inexpensive solution Effective since different downtown uses peak at different times Out of 500+ parking spaces, 300+ are filled by workers with merchant permits 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Will still hear parking complaints; it is the problem that will not go away Needs constant re-calibration in response to evolving conditions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Recommended.</i> Priority on parking management plan for weekday 11AM to 2 PM “lunch” hour, when there is the greatest competition for parking
Calibrate existing parking system to better reflect convenience, turnover and use; analyze data from existing pay stations to better understand parking usage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enables parking system to be optimized to convenience of users Lower-cost option Likely translate into less opposition to pay stations Essential for arriving at parking management strategy Capitalizes on one of the greatest strengths of the pay stations (parking info) Fundamental knowledge for all parking decisions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Yet, public objection to pay stations may remain due to character and confusion problems Contingent upon analysis of pay station data Potential for data to reveal politically unpopular findings about parking habits 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Recommended.</i>
Use parking funds to cross-subsidize merchant/employee passes (but park at further lots)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increases economic value to merchant by freeing up the most convenient car spaces for shoppers Reduces hardship to independent firms/businesses and part-time and low wage earners Actually improves enforcement since greater proportion of merchants and workers will subscribe and thus be found out if using more convenient spaces 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Goes against reluctance to share or spend entirety of parking funds on parking management Uncertainty of revenue stream; would also compete for funds with other downtown uses (i.e., BID) Currently parking funds go into general revenue stream, which in some ways is sound policy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Not recommended.</i>
Eliminate pay parking meters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides easy answer in which to generate political support from shoppers and merchants Acknowledges the concern expressed by some that paid parking is inconsistent with Rye’s character 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Less turnover of vehicles proximate to stores Economic detriment to downtown businesses (decreases access to convenient parking) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Not recommended.</i> Too early to decide on pay stations. Also, paid parking/enforcement is beneficial to merchants if calibrated correctly.
Wait-and-see policy with existing pay stations (at least one more year)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Too early to gauge the real issues with the meters: confusion, inconvenience, configuration or timing. Allows an appropriate period for adjustment, as well as data-gathering on parking trends. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Disregards likely merchant/resident dissatisfaction with accepting the status quo; i.e., insensitive to sense of urgency to make decisions about the meters sooner; creates political penalty 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Recommended.</i> Too early to decide on pay stations.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Depoliticizes the issue if bipartisan. - Disregards the fact that paid parking works in favor of merchants, likely an issue of calibration and not rescinding the meters. 		
Eliminate parking requirements for side streets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Potential to help spur development with ground-floor retail on side streets (increase downtown retail inventory) - Rent differentiation may encourage greater retail diversity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Potential to change character if side streets are built out - Puts greater pressure on central parking lots 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Not recommended</i> Payment in Lieu of Parking (PILOP) is preferred
Consider a joint parking facility with Metro North near train station	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Resolves the unmet commuter parking demand - Provides shared parking opportunities with downtown shoppers, given commuter peaks - Contributes to rethinking the metro North station area as a development area - Potential to complete as a mixed use development with retail - Leverages relationship with Metro North to cover something like half the cost 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Tenuous relationship between the City and Metro North; would need arbitration - Concern about potential for Rye to become a transit hub - Major public investment would be necessary 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Conditionally recommended</i> ten years out, tied to additional development, not transit.
Consider a central reservoir parking structure (parking deck in central portion of CBD)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Enables a wider, more significant level of development - Would be the “go-to” parking lot where shoppers would always expect to find a space - Solves long-term parking capacity issues - Can provide liner building facing Smith Street to provide expanded retail and maintain pedestrian ambiance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Comfort level with “image” of the deck unlikely given the backlash from the meters - Major public investment required; City fiscally conservative 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Conditionally recommended</i> ten years out, tied to additional development; not based on current demand.
Create public / shared parking opportunities in the southern portion of Purchase Street as part of any publicly initiated development in that vicinity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Enhances the market for businesses towards the lower edge of Purchase Street - Recognizes that the City should consider parking implications in development of former CVS site - Can take advantage of slope to create below-grade parking - Can relieve parking demand at the library 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Limited opportunities to expand parking in this vicinity - Major public investment required; City fiscally conservative 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Recommended</i>



V. IMPLEMENTATION

Implementation Matrix

The following tables list the various recommended strategies included in Chapters II, III and IV. Each of these is broken out by category along with the timeframe, involving partners, cost, effectiveness and potential funding source for each. The abbreviations in the timeframe column are as follows:

S = short-term (one to two years)

M = medium-term (three to five years)

L = long-term (over five years)

O = ongoing

Downtown Rye Action Strategy

RECOMMENDED STRATEGY	TIMEFRAME	INVOLVED PARTNERS / PARTIES	COST TO CITY OF RYE	EFFECTIVENESS	POTENTIAL FUNDING SOURCES
VITALITY AND RETAIL MIX					
1. Update use classifications	SHORT-TERM	City	Low	Low	City
2. Allow al fresco (outdoor) dining on side streets (Locust, Elm, Smith, Purdy) along Blind Brook and on backside of Purchase Street buildings	SHORT-TERM	City, CBD Property Owners, RMA	Low	Low	City
3. Identify and sponsor a series of small-scale local events/festivals for downtown	SHORT-TERM, ongoing	City, RMA, CBD Property Owners	Low	Moderate	RMA
4. Infill Purdy Street and Elm Place as a second "Main Street", with tweaks with regard to parking and other regulations to make this more possible	MEDIUM-TERM to LONG-TERM	City, Consultant, CBD Property Owners, Prospective Developers	Low	High	City, CBD Property Owners, Developer
5. Expand downtown living / housing opportunities, with tweaks with regard to parking and other regulations to make this more possible	MEDIUM-TERM	City, Consultant, CBD Property Owners, Prospective Developers	Low	High	City, CBD Property Owners, Developer
6. Employ form-based zoning to induce convenience retail through housing incentives (e.g., one extra floor), with mandatory retail floor plate/convenience use	LONG-TERM	City, Consultant, RMA, CBD Property Owners, Prospective Developers	Low	High	City, RMA, CBD Property Owners, Developer
7. Employ form-based zoning to promote high-design quality and mixed-use redevelopment opportunity on Locust Avenue, at the Ford site, and gas station along Theodore Fremd	LONG-TERM	City, Consultant, RMA, CBD Property Owners, Prospective Developers	Low	High	City, RMA, CBD Property Owners, Developer
8. Redevelopment opportunity: Consider RFP City-owned parcels proximate to train station for private development to advance other purposes (e.g., convenience retail on ground floor/affordable housing above). In the long-term, consider partnering with the MTA with regard to consolidated / shared parking.	LONG-TERM	City, Consultant, CBD Property Owners, Prospective Developers	Low	High	City, CBD Property Owners, Developer
9. Provide concierge service at the train station.	MEDIUM-TERM	RMA, Merchants	None	Low	RMA, Merchants
MAIN STREET MANAGEMENT: STREETSCAPE, DESIGN					
1. Decorate storefronts with flower pots and/or other unifying element(s)	SHORT-TERM	City, RMA, Merchants, CBD Property Owners	Low	Moderate	City, RMA, Merchants, CBD Property Owners
2. Purchase Street: Plant trees and increase landscaping	SHORT-TERM, ongoing	City, RMA, Merchants, CBD Property Owners, Developers	Moderate	Moderate	City, RMA, Merchants, CBD Property Owners, Developers

3. Plant trees and increase landscaping on the side streets	SHORT-TERM, ongoing	City, RMA, Merchants, CBD Property Owners, Developers	Moderate	Moderate	City, RMA, Merchants, CBD Property Owners, Developers
4. Landscape municipal parking lots	LONG-TERM	City, RMA, Merchants, CBD Property Owners, Developers	Moderate	Moderate	City, RMA, Merchants, CBD Property Owners, Developers
5. Enhance Metro North parking lot	MEDIUM-TERM	City, MTA,	Moderate	Moderate	City, MTA, TEA-21 Grants, West County
6. Nightlight signature downtown buildings	SHORT-TERM	City, RMA, Merchants, CBD Property Owners, Developers	Low	Moderate	RMA, Merchants, CBD Property Owners, Developers
7. Improve sanitation and street/sidewalk cleaning	SHORT-TERM	City, RMA, Merchants, CBD Property Owners	Moderate	Moderate	City, RMA, Merchants, CBD Property Owners
8. Replace existing dumpsters with "green" dumpsters, which compact/compost garbage to produce electricity	SHORT-TERM to MEDIUM-TERM	City, RMA, Merchants, CBD Property Owners	Moderate	Low	City, RMA, Merchants, CBD Property Owners
9. Fix/repair sidewalks	SHORT-TERM to MEDIUM-TERM	City, RMA, Merchants, CBD Property Owners	Moderate	Moderate	City, RMA, Merchants, CBD Property Owners, TEA-21 Grant
10. Beautify cut-thru corridors to parking lots	SHORT-TERM to MEDIUM-TERM	City, RMA, Merchants, CBD Property Owners	Low	Moderate	City, RMA, Merchants, CBD Property Owners
11. Improve crosswalks	SHORT-TERM to MEDIUM-TERM	City	Low/ Moderate	High	City
12. Improve circulation of Train Station area	MEDIUM-TERM	City, MTA	Moderate	Moderate	MTA, City
13. Install crosswalk signals along Purchase Street	MEDIUM-TERM to LONG-TERM	City	High	High	City
14. Introduce uniform/upgraded street furniture and receptacles	MEDIUM-TERM to LONG-TERM	City, RMA, Merchants, CBD Property Owners	Low	Moderate	City, RMA, Merchants, CBD Property Owners, Developers
15. Pursue traffic-calming in downtown (e.g., neck-downs/bump-outs, raised crosswalks/intersections)	LONG-TERM	City, RMA, Merchants, CBD Property Owners	Moderate	Moderate	City, RMA, Merchants, CBD Property Owners, Developers
16. Prepare road repair guidelines, linking other capital improvements to streetscape enhancements	LONG-TERM	City, RMA, Merchants, CBD Property Owners, Developers	Low	Moderate	City, RMA, Merchants, CBD Property Owners, Developers
17. Utilize parking funds to seed downtown improvements (through BID – see next recommendation)	MEDIUM-TERM	City, RMA, Merchants, CBD Property Owners	Low	High	City
18. Form a Business Improvement District (BID) and/or Local Improvement District (same thing as a special assessment district)	SHORT-TERM to MEDIUM-TERM	City, RMA, Merchants, CBD Property Owners	Low	High	City, CBD Property Owners
19. Draft design guidelines for new development/rehab to ensure contextual development; e.g., limit buildings to three stories / 35 feet, whichever is less in B-2 district (Purchase); prescribe minimum amounts of windows / plate glass	MEDIUM-TERM	City, Consultant, RMA, CBD Property Owners	Low	High	City, RMA, CBD Property Owners

20. Draft form-based zoning (indicating specific design solutions for specific sites)	<i>MEDIUM-TERM</i>	<i>City, Consultant, RMA, CBD Property Owners, Prospective Developers</i>	<i>Low</i>	<i>High</i>	<i>City, RMA, CBD Property Owners, Developer</i>
PARKING MANAGEMENT					
1. Optimize enforcement of parking regulations, however they are formulated (see remainder of this section)	<i>SHORT-TERM</i>	<i>City, RMA</i>	<i>Low</i>	<i>Low</i>	<i>City</i>
2. Develop a parking management strategy; i.e., identify shared-parking opportunities, earmark remote spaces for sticker parking; search for worker parking outside of CBD	<i>SHORT-TERM</i>	<i>City</i>	<i>Low</i>	<i>Low</i>	<i>City</i>
3. Calibrate existing parking system to better reflect convenience, turnover and use; analyze data from existing pay stations to better understand parking usage	<i>SHORT-TERM</i>	<i>City</i>	<i>Low</i>	<i>Low</i>	<i>City</i>
4. Consider a joint parking facility with Metro North near train station	<i>LONG-TERM</i>	<i>City, MTA</i>	<i>Low</i>	<i>Moderate</i>	<i>City, MTA</i>
5. Consider a central reservoir parking structure (parking deck in central portion of CBD)	<i>LONG-TERM</i>	<i>City, Consultant, RMA, CBD Property Owners, Prospective Developers</i>	<i>High</i>	<i>High</i>	<i>City, CBD Property Owners, Prospective Developers</i>
6. Create public / shared parking opportunities in the southern portion of Purchase Street as part of any publicly initiated development in that vicinity	<i>LONG-TERM</i>	<i>City, Consultant, RMA, CBD Property Owners, Prospective Developers</i>	<i>High</i>	<i>High</i>	<i>City, CBD Property Owners, Prospective Developers</i>

NOTES:

RMA = Rye Merchants Association. This volunteer organization is comprised of many (but not all) business, property owners and other interests in the City's Central Business District.

MTA = Metropolitan Transportation Authority, owner and operator of the Rye Train Station.

CBD Property Owners and merchants are identified as potential cost-sharing partners in the implementation of recommended strategies. These funds could be generated by a Business Improvement District (BID) or similar special assessment district if one is implemented. A BID is typically funded by CBD property owners and often merchants via their rent.